South Central Music Bulletin

A Refereed, Open-Access Journal

ISSN 1545-2271

Volume VIII, Issues 1-2 (Fall 2009 – Spring 2010)

Subscription: Free
This Open Access Journal can be downloaded from http://www.scmb.us.

Publisher:
South Central Music Bulletin
http://www.scmb.us

Table of Contents

Message from the Editor

Nico Schüler, Texas State University, E-Mail: nico.schuler@txstate.edu

As always, I would like to sincerely thank all members of our peer-review board for their hard work and excellent suggestions for improving each article.

All issues may contain articles and announcements in the following categories:

- **articles with a special focus on local music traditions (any region in the world)**;
- **research articles** – generally, all music-related topics are being considered;
- **opinion articles** that are part of, or provide the basis for, discussions on important music topics;
- **composer portraits** that may or may not include an interview;
- **short responses** to articles published in previous issues;
- **bibliographies** on any music-related topic, which may or may not be annotated);
- **reviews** of books, printed music, CDs, and software; and
- **reports** on recent symposia, conferences, and music events.

I would like to call for submissions that fit any of these categories. Submissions by students are, as always, very welcome. All submissions are expected via e-mail with attachments in Word format or in Rich Text Format. For detailed submission guidelines visit http://www.scmb.us.

Research Article

Composer Stephen Lias: Biographical Notes, Musical Style, and Analytical Discussion of *Songs of a Sourdough*

by April Stephens
Campbellsville University
E-Mail: astephens@campbellsville.edu

Introduction

This article on the contemporary composer Stephen Lias (born 1966) is based on my Master's thesis (Stephens 2008) and a continuation of the composer's portrait published in the *South Central Music Bulletin* VII/2 (pp. 20-30). It will provide more detailed biographical information, a stylistic information about Lias' music, and an analytical approach to Stephen Lias' song cycle Songs of a Sourdough (2007).

Biographical Notes

Stephen Lias, the younger of two children, was born in Suffern, New York, on March 18, 1966. Just one year later, the Lias family moved to Lakewood, New Jersey. Stephen lived in New Jersey until he was fourteen years old. He attended high school in West Chester, Pennsylvania, where he graduated in 1984.

Upon graduation, Lias left home for Grantham, Pennsylvania, where he attended Messiah College. In 1988, Lias received his Bachelor of Science in Music Education degree (with a vocal emphasis) and relocated to Lindale, Texas, to work for vocal coach Chris Beatty, nephew of the American composer Samuel Barber. After a year in Lindale, Lias moved to Tyler, Texas, and began his work as a freelance musician in 1990. It was also during this time that Lias worked on, and received, his Master of Arts in Music with an emphasis in Composition from Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, Texas.

After completing his Master's degree in 1991, Stephen Lias married Roni Brown. The couple continued living in Tyler for two more years, while Lias taught at Tyler Junior College as an adjunct professor.

In 1993, Lias moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he completed his coursework for his Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition at Louisiana State University. Teaching again at Tyler Junior College, Lias completed his dissertation and received his doctorate from Louisiana State University in 1997.

In 1997, Lias accepted a position on the faculty of Kilgore College in Kilgore, Texas, about thirty miles east of Tyler. Then, in 2000, Lias returned to Stephen F. Austin University as a faculty member. He and his wife continue to reside in Nacogdoches, Texas, today.

Musical Training and Career

As a child, Lias took piano lessons for a number of years. His natural ability to play by ear was an impediment to traditional learning, but his desire to play continued to increase even after the lessons ceased. His parents were very supportive of Lias' growth as a musician. In fact, when Lias made his first attempts at composition, it was his mother, an amateur pianist, who showed him how to write it down. Lias recalls much music in his home as a child, whether it be his mother playing music on the piano to put him to sleep or singing hymns with his father. There was also an early influence from Lias' church environment as well. Lias' church organist, Anita Greenlee, provided him with opportunity to have his works performed in the church setting. In high school, Lias began to study voice and chose this as his main instrument in his undergraduate education. While in high school, Lias participated in district and regional choruses on several occasions as well as in an all-state choir during his senior year. He also had the opportunity to have some of his compositions performed, which increased his desire to compose.

Lias' first attempts at composition were encouraged by several individuals early in his life, including his mother, his high school choir director, Robert Stuart, and Dr. Richard Roberson, his com-

position teacher at Messiah College. When asked in an interview at what point Lias knew he wanted to be a composer, he responded:

> "I have enjoyed writing music for nearly as long as I can remember, but I did not think of myself as a 'composer' until early in my graduate studies. In high school and early college, I was extremely diverse in my interests and pursuits – I wanted to be a singer – an actor – a composer – a conductor – a pianist – and other things. I was energetic and possessed enough natural ability to enable me to pursue all these interests simultaneously while never focusing fully on any single discipline. This approach had its benefits for me professionally, but probably also was a hindrance to my early growth as a composer." (Stephen Lias in a personal email from June 20, 2007)

During the summer of 1992, Lias joined the Texas Shakespeare Festival as its "Composer in Residence." His main role with the Shakespeare Festival was to write incidental music to the plays produced each summer. Lias remained in this position each summer until 2000.

During the past five years, Lias has taught undergraduate courses, including upper level music theory and aural skills, form and analysis, scoring and arranging, applied composition, and film music, as well as graduate courses, including advanced analysis, scoring and arranging, stylistic analysis, and music theory pedagogy. Lias' research interests include compositional techniques since 1950, the relationship between music and drama, the pedagogy of music composition, and film scoring.

Lias is active in several professional organizations, for example as the founder and director of the Center for the Promotion of Contemporary Composers (CPCC), as a board member of the Texas Chapter of the National Association of Composers U.S.A. (NACUSA), as a national board member of NACUSA, as well as a member of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), the Society of Composers Inc. (SCI), and the College Music Society (CMS). Lias has been selected for many awards, including nine consecutive ASCAPlus awards. In addition, he was a finalist in the "Homage to Mozart" competition, sponsored by the Chamber Orchestra Kremlin in 2006, and was selected as the 2003 Commissioned Composer by the Texas Music Teachers Association.

Lias continues to grow as a composer and professor by attending lectures and workshops of varying topics. In May 2007, he attended the ASCAP/NYU Film Scoring Workshop, jointly sponsored by the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers and New York University's Steinhardt School of Music. He has also attended several orchestration workshops at the Film Music Institute, conducted each year in Los Angeles, CA, by Stephen Scott Smalley, a noted film composer.

In addition to attending workshops and seminars for his own professional growth, Lias has had the opportunity to be a presenter and adjudicator for several conferences and competitions. In the Spring of 2003, Lias served as adjudicator for a composition contest sponsored by the Mid-South Chapter of NACUSA. Another opportunity for Lias to adjudicate came in 2004 at the Nacogdoches Music Teachers Association Student Composition Recital. Lias participated in a panel discussion on vocation and the transition to the professional life at Messiah College on April 18, 2005. On April 28, 2006, Lias presented a 30-minute review of the creation of his work "Pursued" and the events that surrounded its premiere at the "Bright Ideas" conference at Stephen F. Austin State University. The University of Houston invited Lias as a guest lecturer on his works, particularly his incidental music in February 2007. In March 2007, Lias co-presented with pianist Tracy Ward a session titled "Composer and Performer Viewpoints on Two New Works for Piano" at the South Central Chapter meeting of the College Music Society.

The most recent years of Lias' career have been very fruitful and filled with opportunities to write new and unique works. Looking toward the future, he has begun to make international contacts. In November 2007, Lias traveled to Hong Kong to attend the World Music Days of the International Society of Contemporary Music. In the summer of 2008, he will rejoin the Texas Shakespeare Festival once again as the director for the musical *1776,* and he is composing original music for *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, a play by Peter Shaffer.

Lias' Compositional Work

One cannot classify Stephen Lias' compositions as a specific style, such as minimalism or serialism. Rather, Lias' compositions, collectively, are eclectic and versatile. Since much of Lias' works are commissioned, he has a tendency to compose what best suits the audience for each commissioned piece, rather than writing all his music in a specific style. This section will summarize the compositional tendencies in Stephen Lias' work, specifically with regard to harmony, melody, rhythm, form, and texture.

In a personal interview with Stephen Lias (October 13, 2007), Lias discussed two rationalities for writing music, one being for personal expression and the other communication:

> "If it's personal expression, not only doesn't it matter what language it's in but it doesn't matter if there's an audience because you're writing it as an expression of something going on inside you. Once it's on the paper, once it exists you're done. If it's communication, you're not done until someone has heard it and hopefully understood it." (October 13, 2007)

Lias tends to write with the purpose of communication in mind. He attempts to write music using a vocabulary that both the audience and performer can understand and enjoy.

When examining the works of Stephen Lias, one will find some programmatic works such as *Five Characters from David Copperfield*, a work for unaccompanied saxophone depicting characters from Charles Dickens' novel *David Copperfield* including "Uriah Heep," "Traddles," "Emily," "Mr. Micawber," and "Steerforth." *Central Park Suite*, a work for woodwind quintet based on childhood impressions of New York's Central Park. Although many of Lias' works are actually programmatic in nature, he also has many non-programmatic works with still colorful titles. The composer himself stated that, while he has works with generic titles such as *Sonata No. 1 in G Minor*, he feels giving a work a more descriptive title often makes it more memorable and perceptible (personal interview, October 13, 2007).

At the time of this writing, Stephen Lias has written sixteen instrumental works for a variety of ensembles. These works range from a traditional *Sonata for Flute and Piano* to an all-percussion ensemble work entitled *On the High Chisos*. Five of Lias' chamber works involve a brass instrument as one of the main players, while seven are primarily for woodwind instruments. Lias has also written nine piano compositions. His vocal works, choral and solo, include twelve compositions. Lias' greatest numbers of compositions are from his time spent with the Texas Shakespeare Festival as "Composer in Residence." This includes more than thirty theatrical incidental musical scores.

When asked in a personal email communication (January 26, 2008) what techniques he favors in his writing, Stephen Lias' answer was this:

> "… as a rule, I don't think I use any particular techniques specifically for a given type of work [i.e., piano piece, chamber ensemble piece, etc.] … Instead, I tend to focus on one of two things as I choose an approach for a piece: What materials or techniques will best serve the dramatic or emotional needs of this piece? And how can I use this composition as an opportunity to augment my knowledge or facility with some previously unexplored musical vocabulary?"

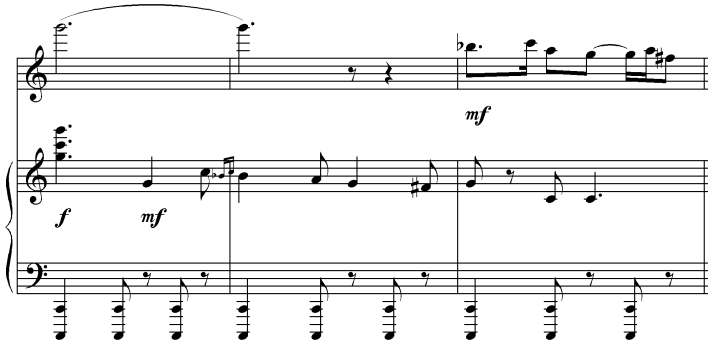
The following sections will take a closer look at Lias' compositional style.

Lias' Musical Style: Tonality / Harmony

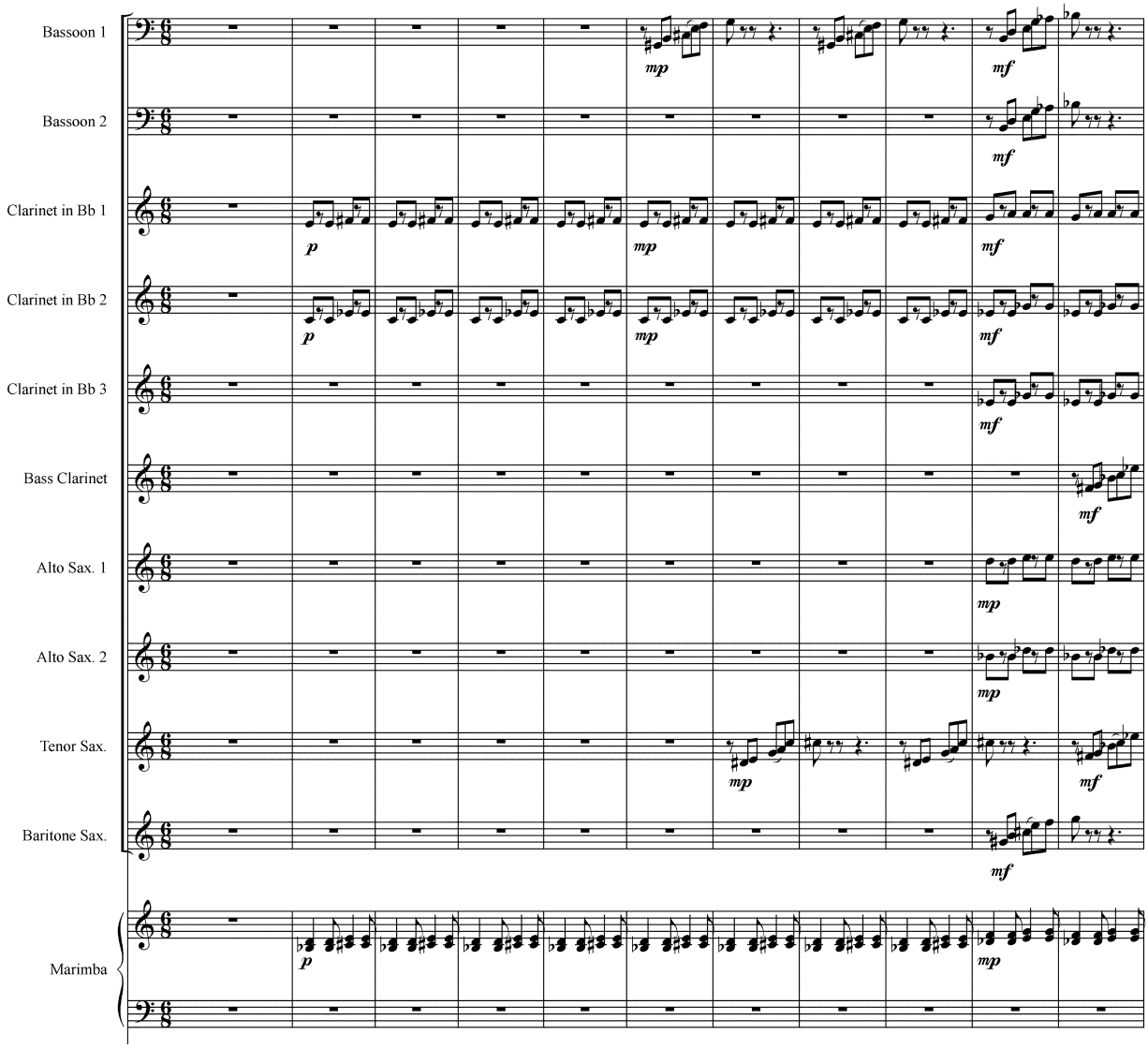
Although most of Stephen Lias' music would be considered tonal, with a tonal center, many of his compositions show a weak commitment to that tonic and have a tendency to shift to different tonalities throughout the piece.

Lias writes mostly diatonic material and looks for interesting harmonies to accompany it. He often finds himself leaning toward raised fourths and lowered sevenths in recent compositions, much like John Williams and Leonard Bernstein have done in past compositions. An example of this can be found in the middle movement of Lias' *Sonata for Flute and Piano* (Example 1). Also the main theme of Lias' *Tarantella* uses a raised fourth and lowered seventh. This work also utilizes the octatonic scale with the returning theme using one of three forms of the octatonic scale and the other two

sections utilizing remaining two forms of the scale (Example 2).



Example 1: *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, movement 2, mm. 103-105

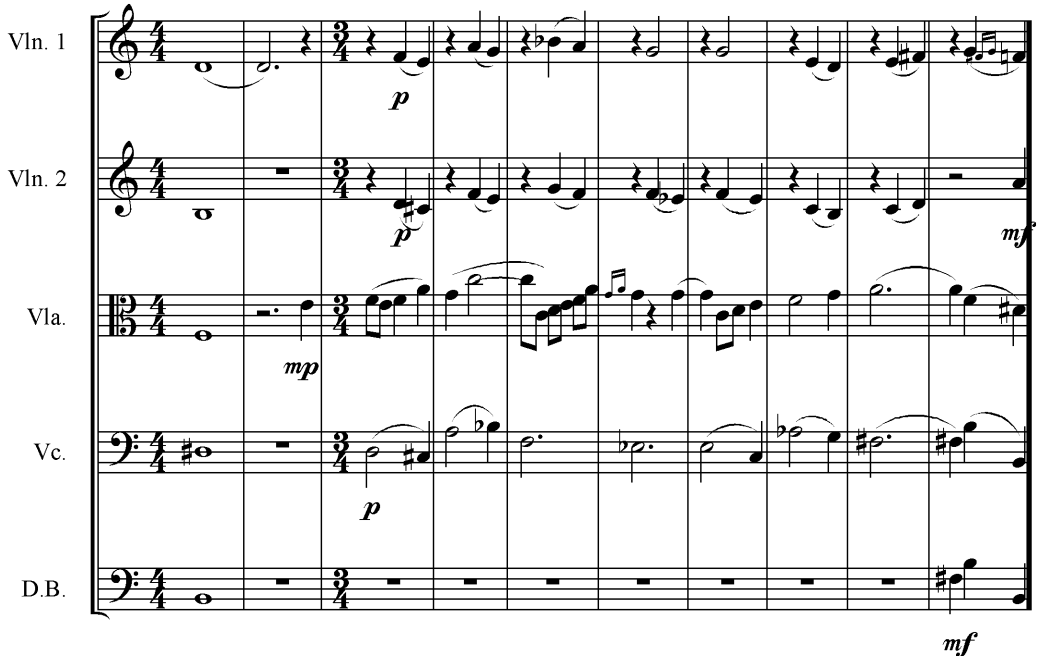


Example 2: *Tarantella*, mm. 1-11[1]

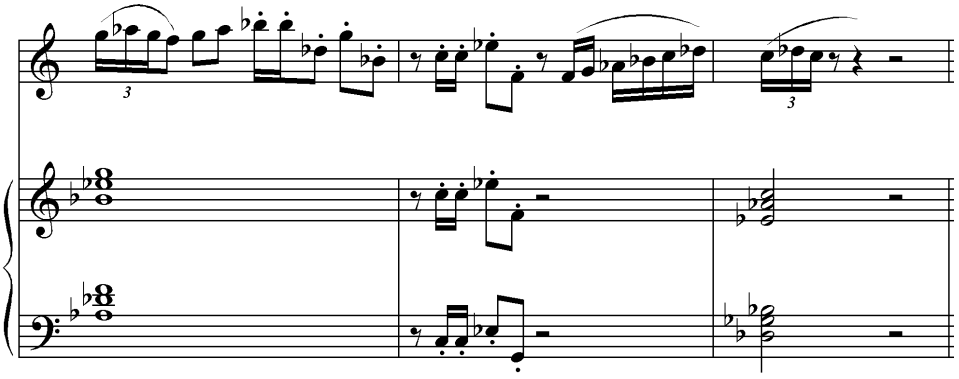
[1] This example excludes the non-pitched percussion parts and those parts that have rests in the measures indicated.

The tonality of Stephen Lias' theatrical works tends to vary greatly, depending on the dramatic needs of the production. For example, the musical score for the play *Abundance*, is mostly pentatonic, modal, or diatonic, imitating the simplicity of Western folk music. These tonalities are fitting for the production that requires extremely sparse and colloquial sounds. The score for *Gaslight* uses mostly atonal and serial techniques in order to symbolize the mental dissolution that the heroine experiences. The middle section of *Pursued* was inspired by the works of Arnold Schoenberg and includes a quotation of a serial melody. Lias quoted a row from Schoenberg's *String Quartet No. 4* by placing the pitches in a new meter and rhythmic setting. He then placed a triadic harmonic and melodic structure above the newly written row. This is shown in the cello part in measures 50-57 of the *Pursued* score (Example 3).

In his *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, Lias employs polychords throughout the three movements. He stated: "While the sonority is somewhat incidental to the first movement, it is much more fundamental to the second movement and helps establish the overall sound pallette of the piece." (Example 4.)



Example 3: *Pursued*, mm. 48-57



Example 4: *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, movement 1, mm. 138-140

Lias' Musical Style: Melody

When Stephen Lias begins the process of writing a melody, he first looks at what instrument for which he is writing a melody. It is important to him that he writes a melody that works well on the given instrument. In Lias' music, fast instrumental works are likely to be angular and agile, while slower melodies can usually be easily sung.

Lias' process regarding voice leading is similar to the process used by many composers: he chooses the harmonic structure he wants, then makes voicing choices as needed to ensure that all the parts turn out to have musical lines. Though some composers may be more counterpoint-oriented than Lias, he does use contrary motion frequently in his works (e.g., *Ebullience* and *Songs of a Sourdough*). *Ebullience*, for eight-part trumpet choir, was described by a reviewer at its premier performance as a "homophonic treatment for the trumpets highlighting soaring melodies supported by energetic and beautiful harmonies."

When writing melodies in vocal music, Lias depends heavily on the flow and meaning of the text. The written melody must convey both the meaning of the text as well as the emotional response it is to evoke in the listener. The same concept goes for Lias' incidental music. The plot of the play determines the feel of the music.

Lias' Musical Style: Rhythm / Meter

Stephen Lias' concept of rhythm can probably be characterized as traditional, in that he hasn't experimented greatly with a lot of mixed meters and exotic rhythmic patterns. He stated (in a personal email correspondence on January 26, 2008) that he tends to get caught up in other aspects of his writing, such as harmony, form, and melody. When asked if he favored a specific meter, Lias was quick to state that if he were to write in any type of meter easily, it would be compound meter. He often finds it easier to compose a piece in a compound meter such as 12/8 than in any other.

Lias' Musical Style: Form

In general, Stephen Lias does favor a specific form over another in his writing. The form of his vocal music is molded by the text, and his theatrical music is driven by the dramatic effect needed.

When it comes to instrumental works, Lias tends to be somewhat of a traditionalist with regard to form. He has written many works in ternary form, including *Pursued*, *Ebullience*, *Restless*, and *White Water*. The basic design for *Pursued* includes three sections; the outer sections are filled with fast, restless music and the middle section much slower. The last movement of his *Sonata in G Minor* as well as the first movement of the *Sonata for Flute and Piano* are composed in sonata form. *Tarantella*, Lias' most recent work, is written in a five-part rondo form.

Lias also has several character pieces, including the *Five Characters from David Copperfield*, based on characters from Charles Dickens' novel *David Copperfield*, and *Summer Diaries*, written while Lias was working at the Texas Shakespeare Festival, based on a significant event that happened each day over the course of a week. Each movement depicts a specific activity Lias participated in each day, the movements are: I. "Monday (A Movie)," II. "Tuesday (A Birthday)," III. "Wednesday (A Meeting)," IV. "Thursday (A Show)," and V. "Friday (A Lecture)."

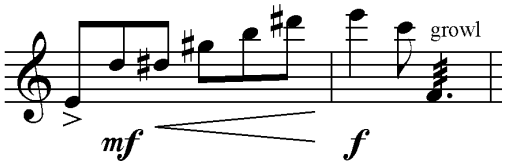
Lias' works are typically short, not longer than six minutes. If a longer work is needed, Lias prefers to break the work into smaller movements, having several shorter ideas rather than one long idea over a span of time.

Lias' Musical Style: Timbre / Texture

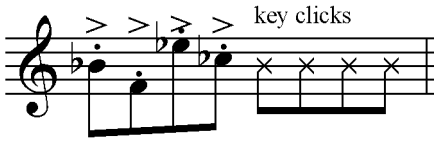
Stephen Lias' music is mostly homophonic in nature. If he does use polyphony, there are generally no more than three lines moving at once. His preferences as a listener have molded this compositional tendency, as Lias believes more than three lines moving at once tends to confuse the listener, while two can add depth and nuance to a work.

Lias uses a variety of instrument combinations in his compositions from flute and piano to brass trios, and percussion ensembles. There is not a particular timbre that he has a tendency to write for over and over. Like many composers, he continues to use different combinations in search of a new and interesting timbre.

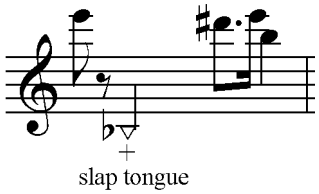
There are a few compositions by Stephen Lias that require specific demands of the player in order to achieve a certain sound. For example, *Lecheuguilla* for flute and clarinet, combines traditional techniques with more difficult demands such as key clicks, air blown through the instrument, harmonics, and pitch bending. In his *Five Characters from David Copperfield*, Lias uses extended techniques such as: slap tongue (both pitched and unpitched), multiphonics, key clicks, altissimo register, "air" noises, and grunting. The following musical examples from this work for alto saxophone illustrate some of these techniques (Examples 5-10).



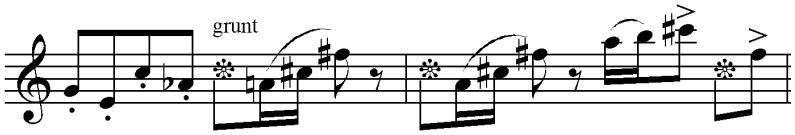
Example 5: ***Five Characters from David Copperfield*****, movement 1, mm. 16-17**



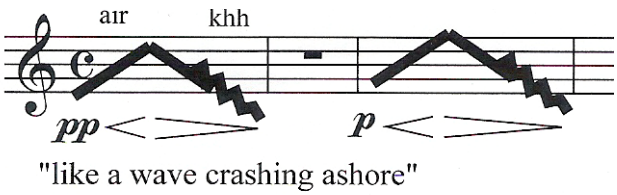
Example 6: ***Five Characters from David Copperfield*****, movement 1, m. 61**



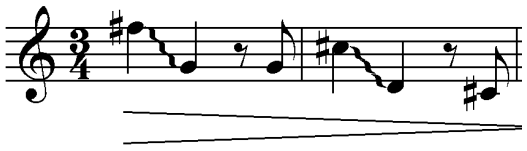
Example 7: ***Five Characters from David Copperfield*****, movement 1, m. 56**



Example 8: ***Five Characters from David Copperfield*****, movement 2, m. 11-12**



Example 9: ***Five Characters from David Copperfield*****, movement 3, mm. 1-3**



Example 10: ***Five Characters from David Copperfield*****, movement 4, mm. 45-46**

***Songs of A Sourdough*: Background Information**

Songs of a Sourdough was composed by Stephen Lias in 2007 for baritone Scott LaGraff, assistant professor of voice and diction at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. LaGraff is currently working on a CD to feature some of American composer Lee Hoiby's newer works. In addition to these works, LaGraff plans to include some other contemporary composers and commissioned Lias to write an original set to be included on the CD.

As Lias began looking for a text to set to music, he searched for the right set of poems. Then, one evening, while watching a documentary on the exploration of the Yukon Territory, Lias decided to do a quick search of poetry about life in the Yukon Territory. His search quickly turned up a set of poems by Robert Service (1874-1958) titled *Songs of a Sourdough*. Once Lias began to read this set, he quickly realized it would be the text of his next song cycle (personal email communication December 5, 2007).

Poet and writer Robert Service was born in Lancashire, England, on January 16, 1874 (Service 2006, 71). Service had a strong curiosity and sense for adventure stories and wanted to travel. The son of a banker, Service followed in his father's footsteps until 1895, when he left Glasgow, Scotland, to move to Western Canada (ibid.). Service lived in Canada only sixteen years, but wrote the majority of his most known works there (Stewart 2003).

Service began writing poetry, and once he collected enough poems for a book, he sent his poems and a one hundred dollar check to his father, Robert Sr., who had emigrated to Alberta. Robert Sr. sent the manuscript to the Methodist Book and Publishing House in Toronto. (Stewart 2003.)

The book titled *Songs of the Sourdough* was first published in January 1907 and was in its 15th printing by the end of that same year (Stewart 2003). These poems reflect the lives and times of the Sourdough, or prospectors and pioneers, in the Yukon. This book of poems contains thirty-three poems, all pertaining to the Yukon. Lias chose five poems from this collection to use in his song cycle for baritone and piano: "The Heart of Sourdough," "The Lure of Little Voices," "Premonition," "Grin," and "L'Envoi."

Songs of A Sourdough: First Movement

The first movement of Stephen Lias' *Songs of a Sourdough* encompasses the sixth poem of Robert Service's collection of poetry entitled "The Heart of the Sourdough." "The Heart of the Sourdough" recalls the fierce, almost desperate call of the men to the wild, that is, the rough life of the men who explored and mined the Yukon Territory. Service describes a scene of the extreme conditions of living and working in the mountains, yet the Sourdough, or pioneer, still feels compelled to live the life that he knows will eventually be his death. The verses of this poem are as follows (Service 1908, 38-40):

There where the mighty mountains bare their fangs unto the moon;
There where the sullen sun-dogs glare in the snow-bright, bitter, noon,
And the glacier-gutted streams sweep down at the clarion call of June:

There where the livid tundras keep their tryst with the tranquil snows;
There where the Silences are spawned, and the light of hell-fire flows
Into the bowl of the midnight sky, violet, amber and rose:

There where the rapids churn and roar, and the ice-floes bellowing run;
Where the tortured, twisted rivers of blood rush to the setting sun—
I've packed my kit and I'm going, boys, ere another day is done.

I knew it would call, or soon or late, as it calls the whirring wings;
It's the olden lure, it's the golden lure, it's the lure of the timeless things;
And to-night, O God of the trails untrod, how it whines in my heart-strings!

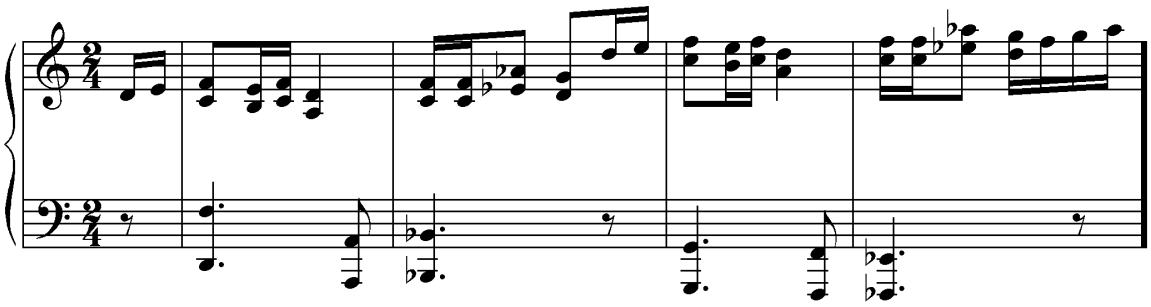
I'm sick to death of your well-groomed gods, your make-believe and your show;
I long for a whiff of bacon and beans, a snug shake-down in the snow,
A trail to break, and a life at stake, and another bout with the foe;

With the raw-ribbed Wild that abhors all life, the Wild that would crush and rend;
I have clinched and closed with the naked North, I have learned to defy and defend;
Shoulder to shoulder we've fought it out—yet the Wild must win in the end.

I have flouted the Wild, I have followed its lure, fearless, familiar, alone;
By all that the battle means and makes I claim that land for mine own;
Yet the Wild must win, and a day will come when I shall be overthrown.

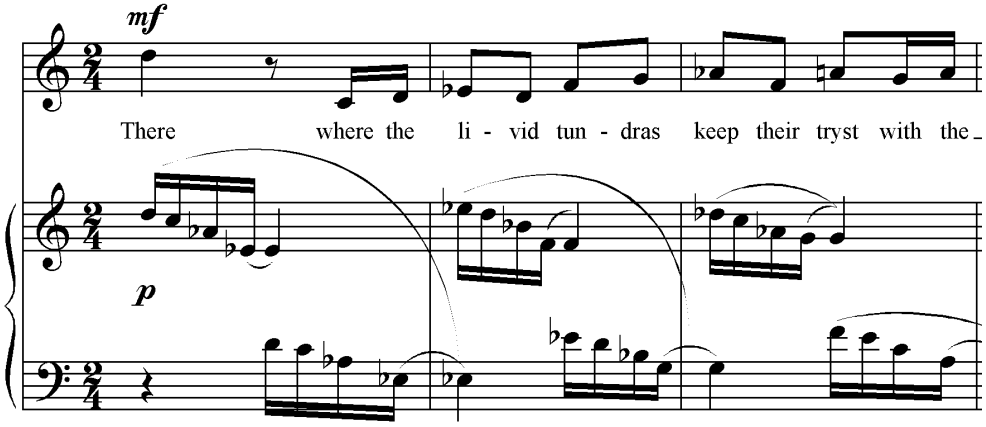
Then as wolf-dogs fight we've fought, the lean wolf-land and I;
Fought and bled till the snows are red under the reeling sky;
Even as lean wolf-dog goes down will I go down and die.

This movement, in 2/4 time, is through-composed and begins with piano accompaniment using mainly fourths in the right hand, implying a quartal harmonic texture. The beginning of this movement (Example 11) also introduces a rhythmic motif that will occur throughout the movement, two sixteenth notes and an eighth note. It also appears in its inversion.



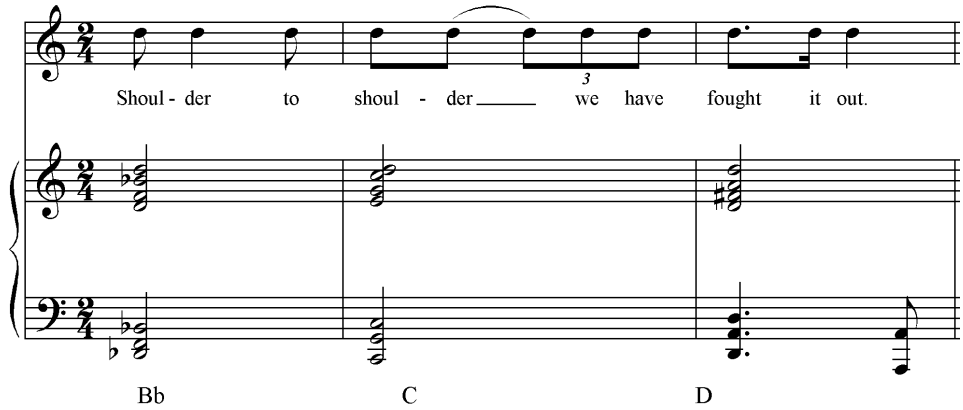
Example 11: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 1, mm. 1-4

The baritone vocal part ranges from the A two octaves below middle C to the D directly above middle C. When Service's text begins a new phrase, Lias often changes the texture of the accompaniment to signify the change. For example, the first verse of text is portrayed in the music with loud, sharp rhythms with a sense of excitement. When Service starts a new verse, Lias' accompaniment changes to downward, cascading arpeggiations with a dynamic marking of *piano* (Example 12).



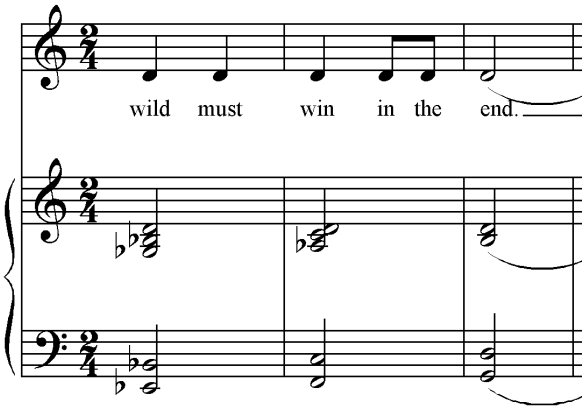
Example 12: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 1, mm. 27-29

One motive occurs throughout all five movements of this work. It is a three-chord motive of ascending triads, which is most commonly used at the point of climax of each movement, and the voice is singing a pedal tone on D. The first time it is stated in "The Heart of the Sourdough" is in measures 112-114 (Example 13).



Example 13: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 1, mm. 112-114

This motive, or a variant of some kind, is often repeated several measures later in a softer, more introspective tone after the climax of the movement. An example of this occurs in measures 117-119 of the first movement of this song cycle (Example 14).



Example 14: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 1, mm. 117-119

Songs of A Sourdough: Second Movement

The next poem chosen by Lias is "The Lure of Little Voices." In contrast to the previous text, this poem is quiet, almost whisper-like. The "Little Voices" in this poem is the wild, and it constantly calls him to leave his family to go back to nature and to the life of a sourdough. This poem is a man talking to someone, most likely a loved one, about the call to the wild. Service speaks of the grip that life as a sourdough has on a man – how he belonged to nature long before he had anything else. In this poem, the man seems torn between life with the woman he loves and the life of exploration in the Yukon. The poem ends with the man leaving his love in the middle of the night to avoid a "bitter leaving" because "His Loneliness" is calling, and he must obey. The entire text of this poem is as follows (Service 1908, 50-52):

There's a cry from out the Loneliness—Oh, listen, Honey, listen!
Do you hear it, do you fear it, you're a-holding of me so?
You're a-sobbing in your sleep, dear, and your lashes, how they glisten!
Do you hear the Little Voices all a-begging me to go?

All a-begging me to leave you. Day and night they're pleading, praying,
On the North-wind, on the West-wind, from the peak and from the plain;
Night and day they never leave me—do you know what they are saying?
"He was ours before you got him, and we want him once again."

Yes, they're wanting me, they're haunting me, the awful lonely places;
They're whining and they're whimpering as if each had a soul;
They're calling from the wilderness, the vast and godlike spaces,
The stark and sullen solitudes that sentinel the Pole.

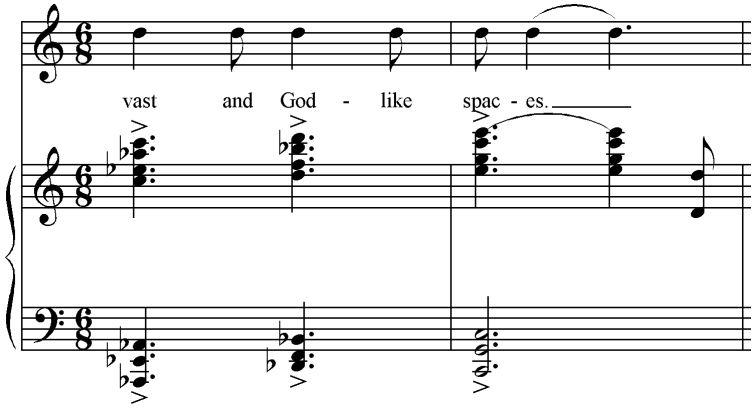
They miss my little camp-fires, ever brightly, bravely gleaming
In the womb of desolation where was never man before;
As comradeless I sought them, lion-hearted, loving, dreaming;
And they hailed me as a comrade, and they loved me evermore.

And now they're all a-crying, and it's no use me denying;
The spell of them is on me and I'm helpless as a child;
My heart is aching, aching, but I hear them sleeping, waking;
It's the Lure of Little Voices, it's the mandate of the Wild.

I'm afraid to tell you, Honey, I can take no bitter leaving;
But softly in the sleep-time from your love I'll steal away.
Oh, it's cruel, dearie, cruel, and it's God knows how I'm grieving;
But His Loneliness is calling and He knows I must obey.

The second movement of *Songs of a Sourdough* starts in stark contrast to the first movement. "The Lure of Little Voices" begins with a soft, lilting piano introduction, immediately changing the tone of the cycle from a fast moving song to a slow, almost lullaby-like song. While the first movement is primarily *forte* throughout, "The Lure of the Little Voices" is much softer, beginning and ending on *mezzo-piano*.

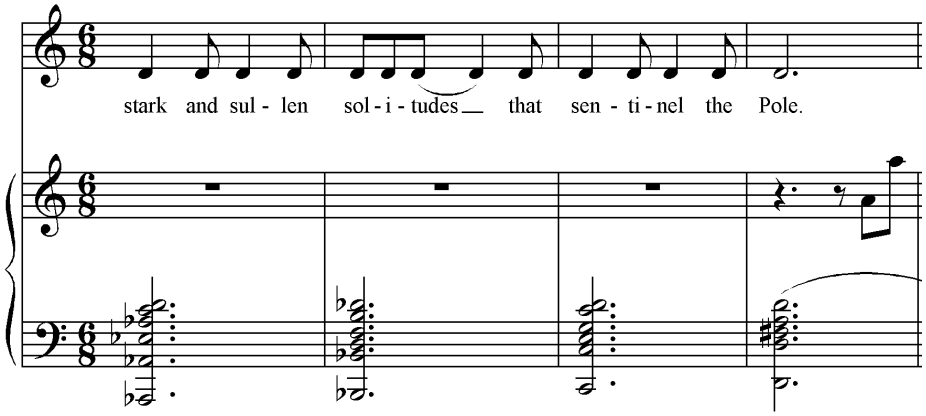
In 6/8 meter, this movement conveys a slower, more intimate set of texts. The tempo of the music speeds up and becomes increasingly more dissonant as the movement develops. The form of this movement is best described as ternary (aa – bc – aa). The three-chord motive that was first introduced in the first movement reappears in measures 70-71 of the second movement (Example 15).



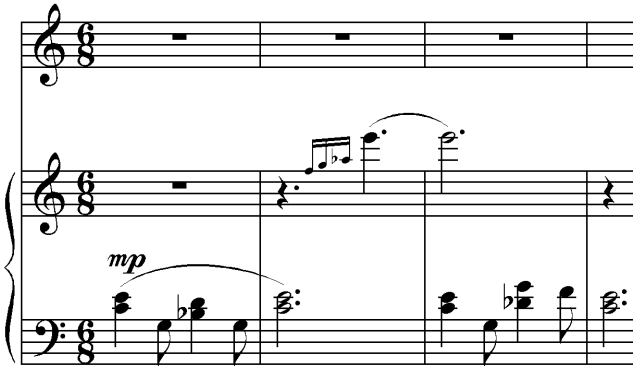
Example 15: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 2, mm. 70-71

This statement of the three-chord motive is rhythmically faster than its original statement in the first movement. Lias emphasizes the importance of this motive by stating it again a few measures later, in measures 74-77 (Example 16). This time, Lias gives it four ascending chords to make his statement.

Lias employs a "music-box" like melodic figure in the piano with an ascending sixteenth-note motive throughout, shown in Example 17.



Example 16: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 2, mm. 74-77



Example 17: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 2, mm. 1-4

Songs of A Sourdough: Third Movement

The third movement, "Premonition," is the most serious of the five texts chosen by Stephen Lias. This poem is a somber look at a man who has a premonition that his love dies. Then, one year later, he is sitting by her grave. Service's words are pensive and solemn (Service 1908, 112):

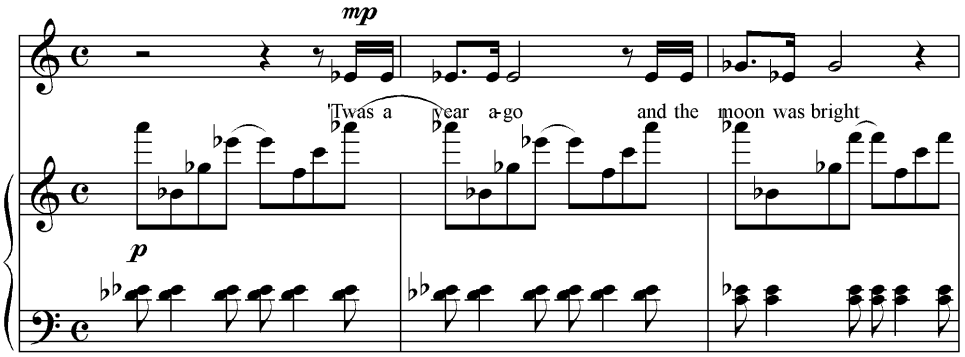
'Twas a year ago and the mood was bright
(Oh, I remember so well, so well),
I walked with my love in a sea of light,
And the voice of my sweet was a silver bell.

And sudden the moon grew strangely dull,
And sudden my love had taken wing;
I looked on the face of a grinning skull,

I strained to my heart a ghastly thing.
'Twas but fantasy, for my love lay still
In my arms with her tender eyes aglow,
And she wondered why my lips were chill,
Why I was silent and kissed her so.

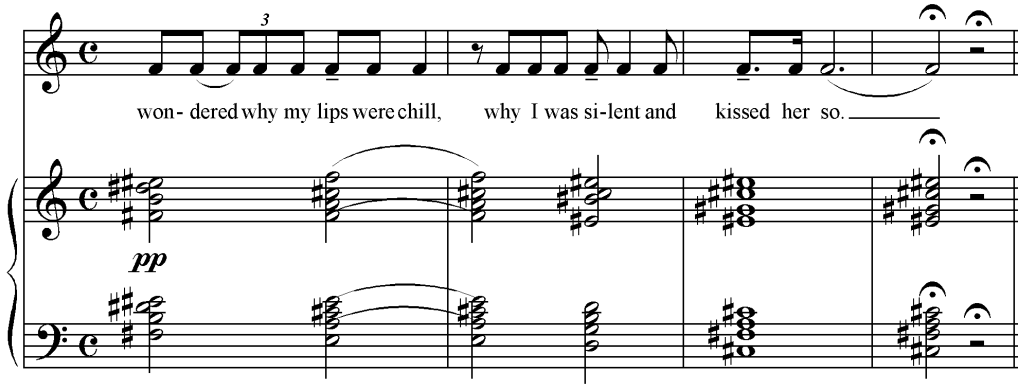
A year has gone and the moon is bright,
A gibbous moon like a ghost of woe:
I sit by a new-made grave to-night,
And my heart is broken—it's strange, you know.

"Premonition," written in 4/4 time, moves slowly and grows in intensity as the text changes to thoughts of death and mourning. Like the first movement, "Premonition" is through-composed. The end of the movement finishes the way it began with just the piano. The vocal line of this movement makes much use of an eighth-note triplet rhythm as well as many sixteenth notes followed by a dotted eighth and sixteenth note. The range of the vocal line extends from the C# below middle C up to the D above middle C.



Example 18: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 3, mm. 2-4

The three-chord motive is slightly altered in this movement. Rather than using three or four ascending chords, Lias chose to invert this motive and write descending chords. This is, perhaps, due to the somber subject of death. It is also important to note these descending chords are not played under a D pedal tone, as in the two previous movements. Instead, there is an F pedal-tone to accompany these chords. (Example 19.)



Example 19: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 3, mm. 31-34

Songs of A Sourdough: Fourth Movement

"Grin" is the fourth movement of Lias' *Songs of a Sourdough*. In Service's original book of poetry, "Grin" actually appears before "Premonition." Lias' reasoning for taking this poem out of order is to help the flow of the cycle. "Premonition" is very dark and serious, therefore, having a light-hearted song to follow helps the listener to quickly shift mindsets. The content of this poem is a humorous look at life in general. Service dedicates this poem to how one might handle the rough times in life. His solution is to simply grin! The complete text of this poem is below (Service 1908, 56-57):

If you're up against a bruiser and you're getting knocked about—
Grin.

If you're feeling pretty groggy, and you're licked beyond a doubt—
Grin.

Don't let him see you're funking, let him know with every clout,
Though your face is battered to a pulp, your blooming heart is stout;
Just stand upon your pins until the beggar knocks you out—
And grin.

This life's a bally battle, and the same advice holds true,
Of grin.

If you're up against it badly, then it's only one on you,
So grin.

If the future's black as thunder, don't let people see you're blue;
Just cultivate a cast-iron smile of joy the whole day through;
If they call you "Little Sunshine," wish that *they'd* no troubles, too—
You may—grin.

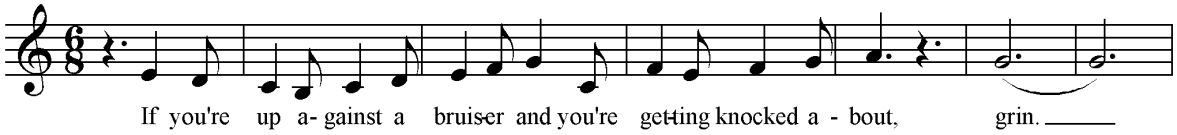
Rise up in the morning with the will that, smooth or rough,
You'll grin.

Sink to sleep at midnight, and although you're feeling tough,
Yet grin.

There's nothing gained by whining, and you're not that kind of stuff;
You're a fighter from away back, and you *won't* take a rebuff;
Your trouble is that you don't know when you have had enough—
Don't give in.

If Fate should down you, just get up and take another cuff;
You may bank on it that there is no philosophy like bluff—
And grin.

In 6/8 time, this movement moves quickly. The vocal line ranges from the B one octave below middle C to the E above middle C. Every time the vocalist sings the word "grin," the note is held for a minimum of two measures, emphasizing its significance to the poetry. In previous movements, the melody has a tendency to change based on the text and emotional content; in this movement, however the melody line in "Grin" has a tendency to stay the same. An example of this basic melody is shown below (Example 20). The frequent return of this melody makes it easy to describe this movement as being in a strophic form.

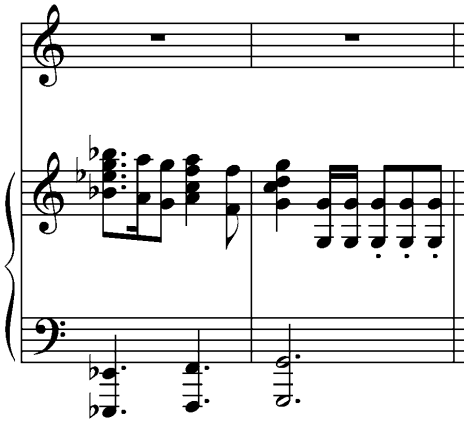


Example 20: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 4, mm. 4-10[2]

[2] This example is just the vocal line. The piano accompaniment has been excluded.

The form this movement could be interpreted as a modified strophic form because of its frequent return to this basic melody.

The statement of the three-chord motive is present, but is in the form of dotted-quarter notes and is not 'accompanied' by voice. Stating the three-chord motive using a faster harmonic rhythm suits the overall feeling and light-heartedness of the movement. (Example 21.)



Example 21: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 4, mm. 76-77

Songs of A Sourdough: Fifth Movement

The fifth movement, entitled "L'Envoi," is the last movement of Stephen Lias' song cycle. It is also the last poem in Robert Service's book of poems. Service closes his collection of poetry from the outlook of a man reflecting on his time spent in the wilderness. The words are introspective as the man recounts his experiences and reflects on the pain that comes from the life of a Sourdough. In Service's printed book of poetry, this poem is printed in italics. This is the only instance this occurs in the entire book. The text of this poem is as follows (Service 1908, 115-116):

You who have lived in the Land,
You who have trusted the trail,
You who are strong to withstand,
You who are swift to assail;
Songs have I sung to beguile,
Vintage of desperate years,
Hard as a harlot's smile,
Bitter as unshed tears.

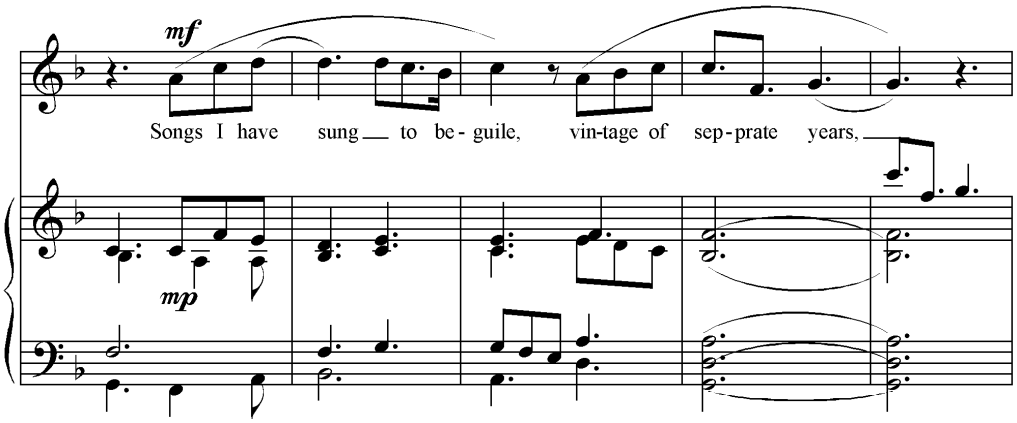
Little of joy or mirth,
Little of ease, I sing;
Songs of men of earth,
Humanly suffering,
Such as you all have done;
Savagely faring forth,
Sons of the Midnight Sun,—
Argonauts of the North.

Far in the land God forgot
Glimmers the lure of your trail;
Still in your lust are you taught
Even to win is to fail.

Still must you follow and fight
Under the vampire wing;
There in the long, long night
Hoping and vanquishing.

Husbandmen of the Wild,
Reaping a barren gain;
Scourged by desire, reconciled
Unto disaster and pain;
These my songs are for you,
You who are seared with the brand;
God knows I have tried to be true;
Please God you will understand.

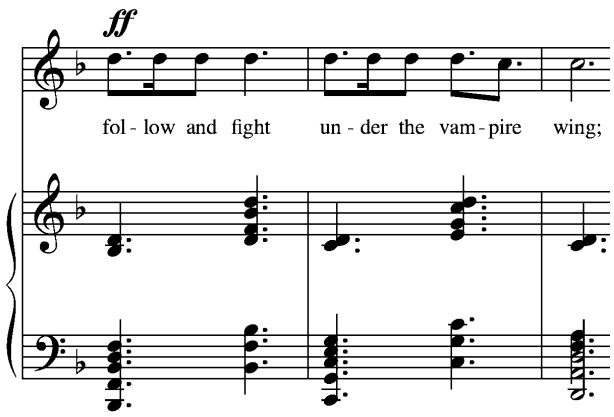
"L'Envoi," also in 6/8 time, captures the introspective mood of the text with a slower tempo than the previous four movements. The form of this last movement is rounded binary, a form the composer has not yet utilized in this song cycle. The range of the voice extends from the C one octave below middle C to the F above middle C – with the highest focal point among all the movements. The final movement of Lias' song cycle, marked *mezzo-piano*, gradually grows louder and louder until it reaches a *forte* marking before starting a gradual decrescendo back to *mezzo-piano* to end the movement. Another way Lias expresses the introspective mood of this movement is by using very lyrical ascending melodic figures in the vocal line, shown in the example below (Example 22).



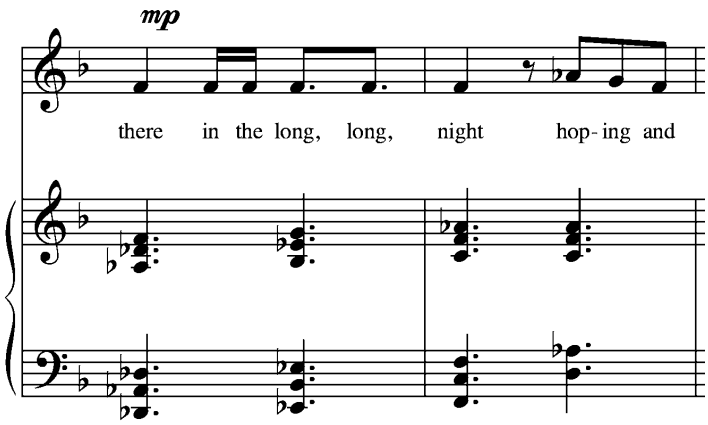
Example 22: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 5, mm. 8-12

Lias states his three-chord motive in several ways throughout this movement. The first, in measures 33-34, is an inversion of the original motive, similar to the motive statement in "Premonition." The main statement of the three-chord motive can be found in measures 49-50. Lias brings back the D pedal tone in the voice, and the three-chord motive is now ascending, as it was first stated in the first movement. The dynamic marking of *fortissimo* suggests that this is the climax of the movement. (Example 23.)

Then, in measures 53-54, the three-chord motive is restated under an F pedal tone with a softer dynamic marking of *mezzo-piano*. (Example 24.)



Example 23: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 5, mm. 49-51



Example 24: *Songs of a Sourdough*, movement 5, mm. 53-55

Final Remarks

Stephen Lias' compositions cannot be defined by a singular style or musical element. His numerous compositions are eclectic and interesting to listen to, as none of them are alike, employing tonality and dissonances with ease. His song cycle *Songs of a Sourdough* serves as an example of Lias' strong compositional abilities and deserves a place in the standard baritone repertoire.

Literature

Lias, Stephen. 2007. Songs of a Sourdough for Baritone and Piano. Manuscript.

Rogal, Samuel J. 2003. "Robert W. Service" in *Critical Survey of Poetry*, ed. by Philip K. Jason, 2nd revised edition. Pasadena, CA: Salem Press.

Service, Robert. 1908. *Songs of a Sourdough*, 14th ed. Toronto: William Briggs.

[Service 2006] = [no author]. 2006. "Biographies of American Poets," *American Poet: The Journal of the Academy of American Poets*: 71.

Stephens, April Heather. 2008. Stephen Lias (born 1966): His Life, Works, and Analytical Discussions of *Songs of a Sourdough*. M.M. thesis. San Marcos, TX: Texas State University.

Stewart, Robert. 2003. "The Charmed Life of Robert Service," *Beaver* 83/1: 32-38.

Composer Portrait

A Portrait of, and Interview with, Composer Kenneth (Ken) Metz

by Aaron Carter-Cohn
The Ohio State University
E-Mail: cartercohn@gmail.com

Kenneth Robert Metz (b. 1954) has been drawn to music his entire life. He began to compose shortly after beginning piano lessons. While earning a Bachelors of Science in Chemistry at Emory University, he frequently participated in improvisation sessions as a flutist. After college, he decided to pursue graduate studies in music, culminating in a Ph.D. in Fine Arts from Texas Tech University in 1997. Since then he has served as an Assistant Professor and now is a Professor of Music at the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) in San Antonio, Texas. His career as an academic has included a number of executive roles, notably chairing UIW's Music Department and serving on regional boards of the College Music Society and the Society of Composers.

In my quest to better understand the life and work of academic composers in contemporary society, I began looking for a composer in Central Texas who was willing to be interviewed. Ken Metz appealed to me, because his compositions included chamber music for a variety of instrumental combinations, as well as large ensemble works for wind ensemble and big band. In addition, his experience as a jazz instrumentalist piqued my interest. Although jazz has entered into the Ivory Tower, particularly as a performance art, there is still an uneasy relationship between jazz and the traditional musics of academia in my experience. Duke Ellington is acknowledged as a great composer and orchestrator by serious composers; composer-conductors Leonard Bernstein and Gunther Schuller are known for their incorporation of jazz as a stylistic idiom; and more recently, younger composers such as those of the post-minimalist movement have incorporated jazz as well as pop sounds into concert music; yet, Ken Metz and I have both met with some consternation when blurring the boundary between jazz and art music. The interview with Ken Metz helped me to better understand that there are more nuanced ways of incorporating jazz into art music than simply writing a jazz-flavored piece for a jazz instrumentation and throwing in a section for improvisation as I had done as an undergraduate. Two of Ken Metz' major works, *Reflections on Monk* (1997) for concert band and *A Mingus Fantasy* (2005) for wind ensemble, use the techniques of the art composer to develop ideas that emphasize the rhythms, timbres, and textures (of particular importance to Metz) of jazz. In addition, these works incorporate stylistic features unique to Thelonious Monk and Charles Mingus, respectively. Since the interview in February of 2009, I have come to appreciate the breed of improvisation that is valued by musical experimentalists of today, including practitioners of both electro-acoustic music and jazz: improvisation that is free from conventions. Such an approach to improvisation is removed from the jazz language of the early 20th century, that of 18th- and 19th-century cadenzas and Baroque realizations and embellishments, but has a lot in common with the approach to composition within academia. Composers in training learn the conventions of the past, so they can make informed decisions about the future of music, so that they can compose deliberately and with intention.

While jazz initially drew me to Ken Metz, it was his diversity as a composer and his wisdom as an educator that inspired me to pursue my research on him further. Metz is a seasoned educator, in the classroom, in applied lessons in composition and double bass, and in the computer music studio. His insights on music pedagogy, with regard to theory, composition and music technology in particular, are a major subject of the interview. As a music theorist, Ken Metz' background in the sciences informs his understanding of music. Much of the discussion of music as an academic discipline found in the interview establishes a connection to acoustics and numerical systems. A global view of music is central to Metz' identity as a composer-professor.

The interview transcript is true to the flow and sequence of the actual interview. The first subchapter, "Development as a Composer," deals with Metz' early experiences with music and how he came to be a composer-professor. As was already stated, music has been a part of Metz' life since he was very young, yet he first completed a degree in chemistry before pursuing music in the academic sphere. As is often the case, a number of composer-professors served a crucial role in his development as a composer.

The "Language, Idiom and Style" subchapter is a survey of Metz' works and the compositional techniques and language he employs. The discussion of his works focuses on pieces composed during his doctoral studies and since then, spanning from 1994 to 2006. Of the elements of style that combine to create music, Metz is more interested in rhythm and timbre than the elements governed by pitch (melody and harmony). The ideal of finding a balance between "predictability and surprise" is revealing about his approach to form. Metz cannot be pinned down to a certain movement within art composition, which may be disconcerting to the listener who seeks stylistic consistency, but this fact speaks to his individuality as a composer. His influences are as broad as his compositional palette, spanning from Béla Bartók to Thelonious Monk.

The survey of Metz' recent works is followed by two shorter sections that address some of the practical issues of being a composer. The "Performances of Works" subchapter explores the venues and performers available to Metz for the realization of his works. "Compositional Approach" elucidates the "when" and "how" of the act of composing: from balancing faculty duties, a family and being an artist to how the piano and the computer factor into the process.

In the "Philosophy on Education" subchapter, Metz shares his pedagogical philosophy and perspective. His teaching experience has included ensemble directing, classroom teaching and private instruction in several disciplines within music, but the focus here is on the teaching of music theory and composition.

"Composition Today" spans a wide variety of issues under the umbrella of new art music. Metz talks about the options for translating study in composition into a career (of which there are many, but with stiff competition), but at the same time makes it clear that he is training his students to become educators. Other topics include the role of orchestras in American culture and how new music is presented by regional symphonies.

A strong background in science and mathematics is once again underscored in the final subchapter of Chapter II, "Music and Numbers". Music as a numerical system has long fascinated Ken Metz and is the subject of his article "Why 7? A Model for Tonality" (unpublished manuscript, 2000). While this section only scratches the surface of the thorough discussion found in his article, it links his thought about music and numbers to earlier parts of the interview and concludes with refreshing and optimistic words about the future of art music from Arnold Schoenberg.

This interview with Ken Metz was conducted and recorded in his office at the University of Incarnate Word in two sessions, on February 12th and February 19th of 2009. The interview recording was transcribed and edited for continuity by the author and approved by Ken Metz.

Development as a Composer

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Tell me about your early musical influences and experiences as a child.

Ken Metz:
One of the first things I remember is standing in front of a mirror, singing along with Peter Pan: I'm looking at myself and singing "A Pirate's Life for Me", and suddenly I realize that there is this musical environment and that I'm in this musical environment. I think that was when it really started, so my early musical experiences would be things like Disney records, though I didn't realize it at the time. *South Pacific* was really big, too.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
That's the Disney *Peter Pan,* not the Broadway musical?

Ken Metz:
The Disney version. I was also quite impressed by the music of *Bambi*. We had a lot of records. I think that's where it started to happen.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
When did you begin studying and playing the bass? And flute?

Ken Metz:
Actually, not until I was older, in my twenties. I started playing the flute at around seventeen or so. Before that, I took some piano lessons when I was a kid and could play a little. I was always hacking at some kind of musical instrument all my life.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So you had a piano in the house when you were a kid.

Ken Metz:
I had a piano in the house, and I would mess around with it a lot. I'm not a very good pianist at this point – I wish I were a better pianist. I was always doing some kind of musical stuff and always singing. I was very good at mimicking, I was able to sound exactly like singers – I could sing exactly and sound exactly like them. In fact, I used to do that for people, sit there and entertain them by singing. "Here's so and so," or they'd say "Do this one!" and I'd sing that person. But then, somewhere along the line I lost that, it went away.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Was it with your voice changing?

Ken Metz:
I don't really remember why it went away, but by the time I was about ten I was no longer able to do that.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
At what age did you start composing? Was it connected with improvisation on an instrument?

Ken Metz:
I actually started composing when I was pretty young. I had a piano teacher when I was in the fourth or fifth grade who encouraged me to compose. Before I could even play well on the piano, he had me write a little piece. So, I was very young when I was first exposed to the idea of doing that. At first, it was not connected with improvisation, but later I did do a lot of improvisation at the piano and on the flute. During college, I played jazz flute mostly and I would hook up with people and we'd do a lot of improvisation. In fact, I improvised music before I learned how to read music well.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Would you use diatonic scales, or was it more chromatic?

Ken Metz:
I think it was always a little on the chromatic side.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Would your friends play guitar or piano and play chords?

Ken Metz:
It was freer than that at first. Some of them knew more than I did, but I was just blowing. I really didn't even know what I was doing – in fact, I probably still don't really know what I'm doing [Dr. Metz chuckles].

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Your undergraduate degree is in chemistry, why did you decide to pursue advanced degrees in music and change your career path?

Ken Metz:
That's a tough story, but basically I majored in chemistry and then I realized that I really didn't want to spend my life in a laboratory – that was not for me. It didn't take me long to realize that. At first, I was really into the idea of synthesis, and I wanted to be able to synthesize things. Fortunately, I found my knowledge of chemistry really did apply to music quite well, and it was an easy switch for

me. I became obsessed with music by my second year of college.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Were you playing bass at that point?

Ken Metz:
No, I was playing flute and percussion.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Was composition initially your interest in graduate study, or did your emphasis change?

Ken Metz:
I went to the University of Texas long enough to realize that I probably would not be accepted as a flute performance major, and I wasn't good enough to be a bass performance major, so that kind of limited my possibilities to composition and theory – so that's what I did. So when I went to graduate school, it was in composition. I started my graduate program at the University of Texas, but I transferred to the University of Nevada.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
How did formal training affect you as a composer? You started composing early. How do you feel that formal study has changed you?

Ken Metz:
I have to say that the professors at the University of Texas were really great. I studied with Donald Grantham, Karl Korte in particular, and also Russell Pinkston for a little bit. They really helped shape my composing. Most of all, the formal training made me realize that I had a lot of literature to listen to. I needed to understand more about what I was trying to do and what had been done, what the tradition was and what being creative meant in the context of modern composition. The professors were very valuable to me across the board. When I went to the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, I had a professor who had been Frank Sinatra's arranger for many years. His name was Don Hannah, and he really guided me. All my professors were very effective and helped me a lot, and what I learned from them was very valuable.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
You have written homages to three renowned musicians: Charles Mingus, Thelonius Monk, and Heitor Villa-Lobos. How have they influenced your music and who are some other composers and performers you enjoy and admire?

Ken Metz:
Each of these cases is a very different thing. With Mingus, it was basically a desire to pay tribute to him, a desire to express for myself his very strong personality in music. It really wasn't about his influence per se, but more about his personality as a proud black person who was forced to deliver the mail: his anger and frustration was more or less what I was aiming at. Also, his love of Duke Ellington was part of it. I could get into a long discussion about it. The last movement of the Mingus piece is called "Adios Con Ganges". When Mingus died, he was cremated, and his family took his ashes to the Ganges River and threw them in there; so in the music, I try to revisit that experience in a way.

With Monk, I chose to study his approach to melody for my dissertation.[1] I took some of his melodies and analyzed them with twentieth century techniques. From there, I used these motivic ideas to generate a piece for concert band. The dissertation was an intensive study of his melody and also to some extent his harmony as well. I came to the conclusion that he listened to classical music a lot – in fact I figured out that "Straight, No Chaser" was basically a quote of Strauss' *Till Eulenspiegel*. It is exactly the same melody, and I write about that in the dissertation.

With Villa-Lobos, there was a contest, and they wanted music for a celebration of Villa-Lobos. They wanted music for percussion ensemble – music that didn't necessarily reflect Villa-Lobos' music, but elements of Brazilian music. There is a picture of Villa-Lobos smoking a cigar on the score for the first movement, and the title is "Com Cheruto" which means *with cigar*. I also listened to a lot of his music and listened to things I heard him doing,

[1] Ken Metz's dissertation *"Reflections on Monk" for Concert Band* (Texas Tech University, 1997) includes both a composition and an analytical paper and is available through University Microfilms International.

for instance he liked fourths. But his music is really more classical sounding, and I attempted to go away from that and use Brazilian popular music elements in the actual music and for some reason, I guess…

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
It was what they were looking for?

Ken Metz:
It was what they were looking for. I do have admiration for Villa-Lobos, but my biggest influences are Schoenberg, Stravinsky, perhaps Wagner to some extent, and Bartók. I've listened to a lot of Hindemith. It all had an effect in some way or another on what I would do next. I'd say you'd hear a lot of Stravinsky in my music, rhythmic interest and contrapuntal textures, and that comes from all these people. I mean Beethoven, Bach, Haydn, Mozart – I especially admire Haydn in some ways – he's underrated, unrecognized as one of the great masters of mood and how to use music to get inside of meaning – he's very good at that. Schumann and Chopin – I admire a lot as well.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
All the greats?

Ken Metz:
Brahms, we could keep going …

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
What about some contemporary composers that you're not necessarily influenced by, but you like – maybe totally unknown to the rest of us?

Ken Metz:
I've met quite a few actually. People who are doing great stuff – there are actually too many to mention. I'm fortunate to be in San Antonio with some great composers here who have influenced me. I have a colleague, Misook Kim, whose music I admire, and there is another Korean woman named Hye Kyung Lee whose music I really admire. I go to the conferences, and I meet all these people and they blow me away.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So you really enjoy what's going on in music?

Ken Metz:
Yes, there are so many composers that I admire … David Heuser at UTSA, Tim Kramer at Trinity, then of course there's the guys at UT Austin, Russell Riepe at Texas State – these guys are doing major things.

Language, Idiom and Style

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
The titles of your works are far from vague or nondescript. In some cases they are provocative, such as *Jihad*, or rather unusual, such as *Orca Pequeño*. How do you come to these extra-musical ideas and do you use them as inspiration for writing or are they inspired by the music?

Ken Metz:
The answer is 'yes' [laughter], all possible combinations … *Jihad* is one where it was after the bombings in London, the subtitle of *Jihad* is "July 7th, 2005" the date that they bombed the busses. Artistically, I never have been able to respond to 9/11. It was just too much of an earth shaking for me to come up with anything. I know a lot of people have, but it hit too close to home for me to respond. But this attack, I could respond to. I was in London as a kid, and I remember seeing Arabic people there. When I looked at them, they looked right through me like I wasn't there, and I thought to myself at this young age "Gee, there's these people that don't even see me." Our world is so different from their world – there's this schism. So I was able to respond to that, and I was able to write music that kind of represented this struggle to me. By the way, G-E-B-A-D is the basis of all the pitches (see Figure 1), but I can substitute G# for G, I can use E or Eb or E# or whatever – I can alter the pitches, but the word 'Jihad' is always expressed in all of the musical elements of the piece – its jihad here, its jihad there, its jihad everywhere. So what is that? Maybe that's an innovative thing: it's the use of the letter names as a serial generator.

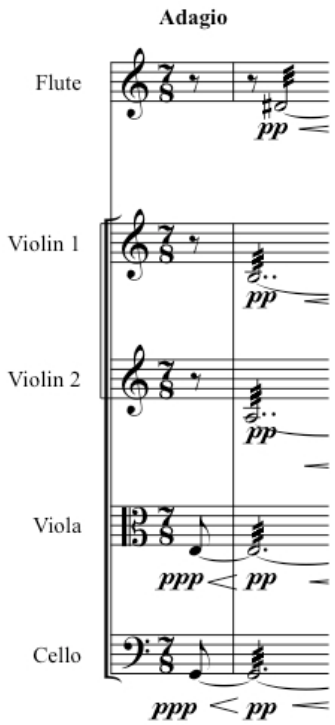


Figure 1: Opening of *Jihad* (2005)

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
But it's not a strict set, you can alter the pitches by half-step?

Ken Metz:
Yes, as long as the pitch has the same letter name, I allowed myself to use it as part of the set. That's how I composed that.

Orca Pequeño means the little whale. The piece was based on a 5/4 rhythm [sings]:

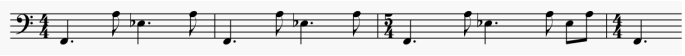


Figure 2: Bass motive from *Orca Pequeño* (1994)

That was inspired by when I was in California and I saw the little whales jumping out and frolicking around.

For me, music is basically an interface between being and dreaming. There are things that come from dreams, and there are things that come from reality. Music can hitchhike with any image you come up with or suggest any kind of image that is part of your experience – so it's like a revolving door for meaning. They talk about semiotics in music – music is great for representation; it can represent anything you want it to. One person can listen to a piece of music and hear a baby crying, and another person can hear Hitler giving a speech; it's neutral in a way.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Do you think it helps to add an extra-musical idea in some cases to clarify?

Ken Metz:
Sometimes it helps the listener. More, I think it helps to create what meaning it is you're looking for in your own self. Again, that's a two-way street, and if titles help people get into the music – great! And if you can write things to explain how you relate to what you are doing in the music – great! That's all good, but actually these ideas are aids to my compositional process. I call it *the motive of the motive*. If I attach meaning to something, it's no longer just a motive that has a pitch and a rhythm, but it's the motive of the motive, which translates from music to language, to meaning, to symbol – to all of those things.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
You have also written pieces that you attached to Mythology: *Ouroboros for Saxophone and Piano* and *Arachne's Dream for Double Bass*. Is there an actual program or scenario connected with these works?

Ken Metz:
Ouroboros is, of course, the snake eating its tail. There's no story to that, that's just an image of perpetual motion and an image of the living organism that is consuming itself while being created, a sort of a symbiotic relationship. The *Ouroboros* theme is a chromatic spiral: half-step, whole-step, minor-third [singing]:

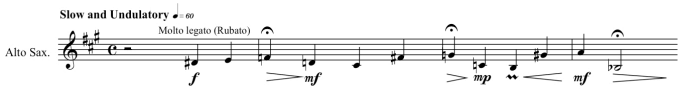


Figure 3: Chromatic spiral motive from *Ouroboros* (2006)

I attempted to create the image of a snake. I actually wrote the theme a long time ago, and I resurrected it. You run out of stuff, so you start digging back in the archives and you bring something out and try to do something with it.

Arachne's Dream was about the image of the spider weaving its web. So no, I don't say there was any program or scenarios in particular.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Arachne's Dream is a composition for solo double bass. Are there any advantages to writing for your own instrument?

Ken Metz:
Sure, you're going to know what's idiomatic. Although, some of the piece, I guess, isn't very idiomatic [laughter]. Composers should really try writing for solo instruments, because it really forces you to try to have something that's complete with just that one voice. If you can do that, then you're getting somewhere with your music, I'd say. It's good to try to turn that disadvantage of the one instrument into an advantage of being able to make whole musical statements.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So there weren't too many double or triple stops?

Ken Metz:
There are double and triple stops.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
But it's mostly monophonic?

Ken Metz:
Yes and no. I take advantage of what a bass can do; for instance, you can drone: use the open strings and move – that's part of what's idiomatic for the instrument. If you're writing for flute, multi-phonics are possible, but by and large you would simply write a solo line. To be able to make that into something that's a successful piece is a real challenge.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
My professors have always emphasized that. Do you find it challenging to write solos or difficult passages for instruments other than your own, and do you consult performers when doing so?

Ken Metz:
I think you should always consult performers. I think that's a criticism one could make of my music, I may not have done that enough. There are piano passages in my music that are tough to play, not just because of technical difficulty, but because the passages don't lie well on the instrument. So I think I'm guilty of that in certain ways with some instruments. I have a pretty good understanding of woodwinds. My understanding of brass could probably be better. Because I play the bass, I have somewhat of a good understanding of strings. For me, piano is very difficult to write for, but I have always tried to write for piano and I keep trying.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
That bridges right into the next question. The piano has been referred to as the 'composer's instrument', and many composers have a strong preference for composing at an acoustic piano. Do you share this preference?

Ken Metz:
I would say that I do, but I think more and more I'm able to just sit there and use my imagination. Then, maybe I'll go to the piano as a way to translate the idea or to get it down. I can hear the basic ideas without the aid of any instrument. I'm picking up the material that is there, being transmitted to me by my being open to listening for it. That's happening for me more often, and I don't have to use the piano as much.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So you rarely sit at the piano and improvise to come up with the ideas?

Ken Metz:
I do, I still do.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
But you prefer to audiate?

Ken Metz: I wouldn't say 'prefer'. Most of the time, material comes to me when I'm going for a walk and I don't have a piano, but I can still know what it's going to be like. What's going on with the rhythm, how the harmony would sound and how the instruments playing it would sound – I can imagine all of that. My early musical experiences taught me to hear the colors of music. People say "You have a good ear" or "You don't have a good ear" – well my good ear is timbral and harmonic hearing.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
You wrote a song cycle on *Mother Goose* nursery rhymes. That seems to be a unique choice, because it is neither heavy poetry nor a sacred text, and a number of the rhymes already have folk melodies attached to them. Why *Mother Goose*, and how did you approach the setting?

Ken Metz:
[chuckle] "Why *Mother Goose*?" is because I have kids. They are twenty now, but when they were young I would read *Mother Goose* to them and I would always give a dramatic presentation. So then I decided that I wanted to investigate the imagery in *Mother Goose*. The song that I started with was "The North Wind":

Cold and raw the North wind blows,
Bleak in the morning early.
All the hills are covered with snow.
Winter has now come fairly.

I attempt to create a whole sound atmosphere around *Mother Goose*, not about children's music, but about the hidden meanings in the rhymes. I began to hear how the oddities in *Mother Goose* could become chromatic ideas that I could inflect into folk sounds. If you look at the score for "The North Wind," in the beginning piano passage, which is really bizarre, I somehow manage to lead the singer to the first note, D, for the word "Cold."

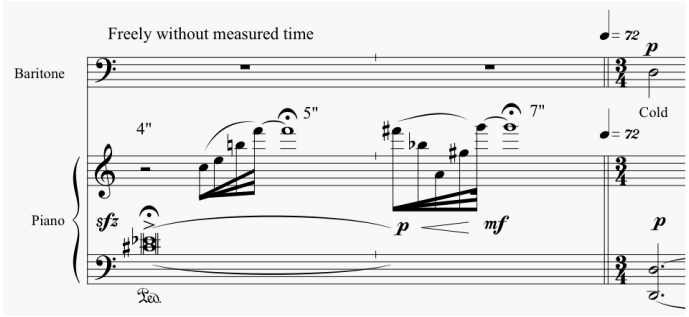


Figure 4: Piano introduction to "The North Wind" from *Songs from Mother Goose* (2003)

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So you aren't emphasizing D, but it still sounds like tonic?

Ken Metz:
All the pitches in the piano opening point to D somehow, it's kind of a weird beginning.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Kind of circling around D?

Ken Metz:
Yes, it circles, but in a strange way that the singer knew that D was the first pitch of his part.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Then you don't need to give them D.

Ken Metz:
Right.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
You recently won a competition with the percussion ensemble piece *Musica visto que Villa-Lobos.* How important is rhythm to your work in general?

Ken Metz:
In my opinion, timbre and rhythm are the two most important things that make a musical piece successful or not. Pitches are third on the list, maybe, but strong rhythmic and timbral thinking and the connection between those two are fundamental.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
How did you construct the rhythms in *Musica visto que Villa-Lobos?*

Ken Metz:
I hate to admit this [guffaw], but for one movement I actually loaded the samba rhythm from Finale and futz-ed around with it and tweaked it to where I wanted it to be.

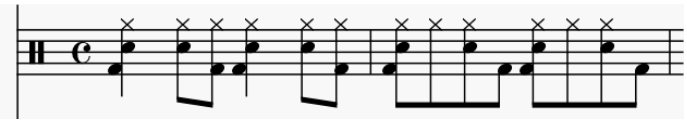


Figure 5: "Quick Samba" pattern provided by the notation software Finale 2007

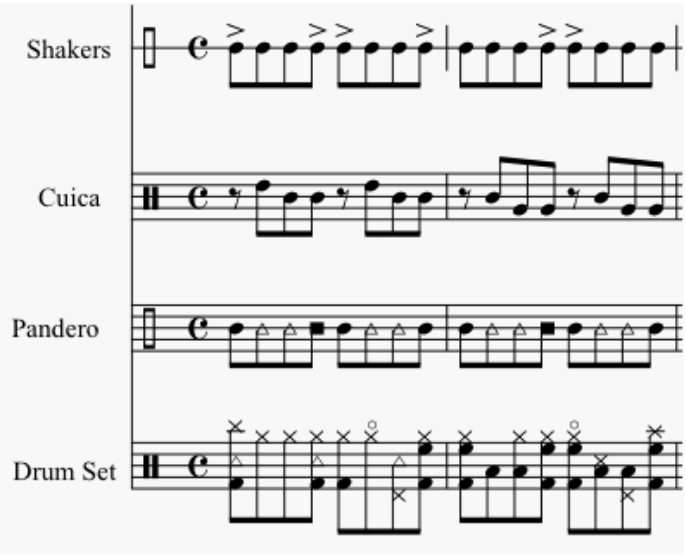


Figure 6: Percussion pattern from Movement V of *Musico visto que Villa-Lobos* (2007)

I was sitting there thinking: "What is samba?" "What is *cinquillo* rhythm?" *Cinquillo* is very important, it has five notes:

Figure 7: *Cinquillo* rhythm as described by Ken Metz

That is an example of a *cinquillo* rhythm [sings].

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So it's pretty fast.

Ken Metz:
I was trying to figure out what the elements of Brazilian music are, and I came up with three influences: there's African, there's European, and there's indigenous Brazilian and Amazonian rhythmic ideas and colors. The music is intended to reflect those various cultural influences. Samba is of African origin, there's a lot of Samba in the piece. I think that *cinquillo* is a synthesis of African and Spanish elements that happened in Latin America. In addition, you have to realize that Spain was under the influence of the moors for over 800 years, and, as a result of that, what's African about Spanish music and what's Spanish about Spanish music is a little difficult to tell. Another difficulty is determining what's from Spain and what's from Portugal, and I didn't know the answer to that.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
In Brazil, there is a large Portuguese influence.

Ken Metz:
Yes.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
We have already established that Villa-Lobos is not one of your seminary influences, but his music is strongly tied to his nationality and the folk music tradition of Brazil, but he was also a serious composer and his music is now part of that tradition.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
What effect does living in San Antonio at the turn of the 21st century have on your work?

Ken Metz:
Well, I have a job here. I'm able to compose, because I live in San Antonio, and I work as a professor here. San Antonio is a very multicultural place, the Hispanic culture is particularly strong, and I don't think that really influences me. But, as it turns out, San Antonio has a lot of composers. We have CASA, the Composers' Alliance, that's a great thing, and I've benefited a lot from that association.

Ken Metz:
Have other places influenced your sound?

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Definitely. Everywhere I've lived, everywhere I've visited and everywhere I've breathed has influenced my sound. The desert in Nevada, the ocean in Florida – the sound of the ocean, the waves going back and forth, the sounds of cities I've traveled to. Smells are really important – I've smelled all over the world, I've sniffed stuff [laughter]. Traffic! In China, it was the traffic that impressed me – there was no right of way, there was just a merging of things.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
You are a jazz player. How does the Jazz idiom factor in to your style? Is it always there, or only present in some pieces?

Ken Metz:
I would like to think that it's not always there – I'm told that it usually is… Let's go back to rhythm and the idea of syncopation. I love syncopated rhythm, and if you love that, you love jazz. I don't listen to a lot of jazz anymore, and that's probably not a good thing to admit. I have been a jazz player, and I would say that it has strongly influenced me. Of course, my dissertation was a study of Thelonious Monk whose music is really different from a lot of jazz – I would say it is idiosyncratic jazz.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So is Mingus.

Ken Metz:
That's true.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
His music is more thoroughly composed than most jazz.

Ken Metz:
You're right – he had a chip on his shoulder about being able to do classical stuff. I went to a concert and heard him perform. He had his music on his music stand and he opened up this huge score like this [spreads his arms], and it fell off the stand. It was as if he was saying: "Look, I composed all this stuff. I'm not just a guy up here saying 'hit me four to the bar'." So the jazz influence is there, and I probably couldn't flush it if I wanted to. But when you're talking about the harmony of jazz, you're talking about the harmony of Bach, so I can't get rid of that part.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
There are a few more ninths in there.

Ken Metz:
A few more ninths – but actually, there are ninths in Bach, they're just not chord-tones. Sometimes, the best part is when you get those sounds and you think: "What's that?" And it turns out that it's a ninth.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
When a composer writes quasi-improvisational lines, for instance in a solo piece, does it reach the listener differently than actual improvisation if they don't know which it is?

Ken Metz:
As Errol Garner said: "Nobody hears you read" – so it doesn't really matter. If they don't know whether it's composed or improvised, there's no answer to that. I hardly ever write quasi-improvisational lines as a rule.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So you don't make an effort to make lines sound free?

Ken Metz:
Only if I'm trying to write a jazz piece. So the answer to that is: I always write everything precisely. There's nothing in my scores that says "improvise here". I don't typically use graphic notation either, where there is a symbol in the score and the player is supposed to wiggle for a while. I have used that kind of a notation in a couple of pieces, but I don't often do that. I guess I'm a stuck-up notation guy.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
What I mean by it is … it sounds like it's improvised, even if its not, and it's not too regular.

Ken Metz:
Yes, that is a goal to make an idea sound like it's spontaneous. Here we go to the principle of "Is it too confusing or too predictable?" A good composer is always playing with that. A well-constructed line has elements of predictability and surprise.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
And that's true for improvisation as well?

Ken Metz:
Yes. The main difference between improvisation and composition for me is: you wouldn't know how long it took me to develop that idea that sounds like it's improvised.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
A Mingus Fantasy and *Reflections on Monk* are both for wind ensemble and both named after jazz composer-performers and presumably inspired by them. Outside of the lack of improvisation, is a wind ensemble any different from a giant big band?

Ken Metz:
It's a totally different concept. Of course, I use a drum set in *A Mingus Fantasy*, so that makes it a little less different. That's an interesting question – I would choose to think of it as very different. Neither of those pieces is intended to be jazz. They're intended to reflect a tradition of jazz to some extent. For the most part there's no swing; I want straight 8ths, and the swing that is there is a result of the syncopated rhythms.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Well, the players are trained differently.

Ken Metz:
Yes, and I want it to be what they're normally doing.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So there aren't any special technical demands?

Ken Metz:
I would like to think that, but for some of the phrasing it would be helpful if they were familiar with jazz. Usually saxophonists are, and usually the brass players would know what to do, and the flutists wouldn't – but I wrote the pieces with that in mind. I am consciously trying not to make it like a big band – if I wanted to do that, I'd use a big band.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
The wind ensemble is recognized as a new frontier for composition, because it is about as common as the orchestra, but there is not three hundred years of literature written for it. Today's composers are quickly filling that gap. Do you prefer to write for wind ensemble, rather than orchestra?

Ken Metz:
No. I have never had my orchestra pieces performed, and I haven't written a lot for orchestra. I would rather write for orchestra, but in today's world your chances of getting a wind ensemble piece played are better. Of course, I've only had two performances of my wind ensemble pieces in my entire life where I was featured. I went up to Southern Methodist University to have the *Monk* piece played, and I had one movement of the *Mingus Fantasy* played – I'm dying to get the other movements played, but it's too hard and too weird. The piece is definitely different from what people are used to. The performers would have to rehearse a lot. The third movement is the strongest; I was able to put together a lot of elements, but I don't know if it will ever be played. Having said that, most of my works that are performed are chamber pieces. I'm not a very successful composer in that sense. I'm having trouble getting large element pieces played – it's hard.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Especially getting a good performance, because you might get a student group to do it, but it might not be the quality of performance you want.

Ken Metz:
Right. Exactly.

Performances of Works

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
How has your affiliation with organizations of composers benefited you? Like the Society of Composers, for instance?

Ken Metz:
If you become a professor, it's how you get tenure. You have performances of your pieces at these conferences, and you put that on your faculty evaluation and submit it every year. They want to know "Why should we keep you in this job?" And you say "Well, the reason you should keep me in this job is because I did this and that performance here at SCI and with CMS, etc." So that's the great benefit. Without it, I probably wouldn't have gotten tenure.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
You have a local organization as well, the Composers' Alliance of San Antonio. Tell me a little more about that.

Ken Metz:
That's helped me a lot, too. Particularly, because I get to listen to other composers around me. I get to be influenced by other composers, and I get critical feedback. I thrive on criticism. You can't say anything to me that I won't take something positive from and that I'll try to build from. I invite criticism, I like criticism – I'm cool with criticism – that helps me to grow. In fact, people that just tell me "Your music is great," are not really helping me. I need to ask "What's wrong with this music? How can I make it better?" That's always my goal: "How can the next piece be better than the last piece?"

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Universities in Arkansas have programmed your pieces several times. What is your relationship with them?

Ken Metz:
I don't have a special relationship with Arkansas, but there have been a lot of SCI and CMS regional conferences there, so I've had performances there.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
I was just noticing on your CV –

Ken Metz:
Arkansas, Arkansas, Arkansas… No, I don't have a relative that lives in Little Rock. I wish I did.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Dr. [Russell] Riepe also just went there to give a performance.

Ken Metz:
Well there's stuff going on there. They want people to come there.

Compositional Approach

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Stravinsky wrote about composing within strictures or guidelines. Do you ever find that useful?

Ken Metz:
Oh yes, as he said: "Only through limitation did I find freedom." That's true. It's not only what you say – it's what you don't say. It's not only how you say it – it's how you don't say what you don't say [laughter], if that makes sense. By limiting what you're doing, it forces you to find other avenues for creativity.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Are there any techniques or approaches of your own that you frequently employ?

Ken Metz:
I don't know how to answer that. I would say the only idea I frequently employ is *the motive of the motive*. Before I start, I try to figure out what it is that will motivate the motives that I come up with. How I can extract meaning from what I'm doing. *Jihad* worked really well for me, because I was able to extract motives by the free usage of the note names. That's a hard question. Each piece brings with it its own approach and its own techniques.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
That kind of fits with the Stravinsky approach. Is there a common thread to all of your music? A Metz sound?

Ken Metz:
This I don't know. That's up to somebody else to figure out. I only know that I try to write stuff that surprises the listener. Beethoven was great at surprising. He'd play something, he'd play it again, and just when you were thinking, "Okay, he's going to play that again," that's when he wouldn't play it. So I think surprise is a very important element in music. Have you ever noticed the dog's ear? When dogs listen, their ears move. Whatever it takes to get that ear to move is what I'm trying to be able to do in music. I don't think I always do it. Sometimes I'm a little too theoretical, and sometimes the music is not as exciting as I would like it to be. Another problem it that a lot of times performers can't play the piece as intended. I'll have a fast tempo and I'll have a slow tempo and what ends up happening is that they play the fast tempo too slow and the slow tempo too fast, and it sounds like I have two pieces at the same tempo. I would like to be able to write music that musicians are actually able to play at the tempi I'm thinking of. I don't know if there is a sound to my music, I wouldn't like to think there is. I'd like to think that my music is still evolving, that each piece has a unique sound. You've listened to some stuff. Do you have an opinion?

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
I guess, I definitely noticed a jazz influence when I listened to the *Mingus* piece and when I listened to the Brazilian piece I noticed the Brazilian influence. I noticed more variety of sounds and style in the *Mother Goose* cycle. There was one song in particular, in the middle of the cycle, where I noticed some jazz voicings and then some of the pieces were …

Ken Metz:
More folky …

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
And then the last one had an imitative piano part.

Ken Metz:
Almost twelve-tone.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
I noticed a lot more variety of sound within that work, but the *Mingus* and *Villa-Lobos* pieces didn't sound similar to each other. Within each piece there seemed to be a consistent idiom.

Ken Metz:
They're pretty tonal.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
I noticed that rhythm was very important in both *A Mingus Fantasy* and *Musico Visto que Villa-Lobos*.

Ken Metz:
Yes.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
You are very busy with teaching, how do you find time to compose? Do you have a composing routine: time of day, home or office, etc.? When and how does notation software factor into your process?

Ken Metz:
Well, *Finale* I've always got, I use it every day. The answer to that is I use teaching theory as an avenue for composition. I write melodies with certain features for use in aural skills, or I compose in a style for theory. I integrate teaching theory with composition. Then once in a while, some of the things I've done in my theory class turn out to be good ideas that I could easily make into good pieces, and I have done that to some extent. Otherwise, I write in the summer – that's what summers are for.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
To do big projects?

Ken Metz:
Yea.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
What are your current projects and future plans?

Ken Metz:
I have been working on a string quartet right now, for no apparent reason. As far as future plans go, I have an offer to write a bass concerto that could be premiered at Shanghai – I'm thinking about that one.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
And then you could have an orchestral performance. That would be …

Ken Metz:
… Wonderful.

Philosophy on Education

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
You studied at large public universities and now teach at a small private university? What are the advantages of those environments as opposed to the perhaps more rigorous and intense environment of a conservatory? Particularly for young composers today.

Ken Metz:
Of course, at a large public university you have more opportunities to have your works performed. You're also likely to receive better performances from the students that are there. University of Texas at Austin had a lot of great performers, so I was able to have strong performances of my pieces. Large institutions are also more likely to have guest composers visit, and students are exposed to more music.

Now I teach at a private university. It turns out that, because I'm affiliated with CASA, I'm still able to have performances of chamber works, but it's difficult to find a large ensemble opportunity. The biggest advantage of a small private university is that students are able to develop in their own space and there aren't as many external influences – which can be a good thing. I'm able to give my students more guidance than they would get at a large university, but overall the opportunities for student composers are greater at a large university.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
And students are exposed to other student composers as well. What about the conservatory environment?

Ken Metz:
To be in a very intense musical environment with serious people really trying to be on the cutting edge is ideal.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
How does compositional pedagogy differ from theory or instrumental pedagogy?

Ken Metz:
A very, very difficult question. I don't know that there really is a single compositional pedagogy. I think it depends on whom you're dealing with and where they come from. There are so many variables that I don't think that there's one way to do it. You have to have many possible strategies for compositional pedagogy, so you can individualize your approach to each student. With theory pedagogy, there's a body of knowledge that needs to be explained. When you're teaching an instrument, there's a technique of playing you need to show them: how to use their hands and how to read the notes. So compositional pedagogy is a very different kind of thing.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Do you discourage your students from relying too heavily on notation software?

Ken Metz:
I don't discourage them, I encourage them to become experts in the software, but they often don't seem to be able to do that; they seem to be more needing of guidance than I would like to see. I would like to see them be able to do more. As far as composition, I don't require that they use software. I prefer it, but I don't require it, and I think that a lot of good stuff can be done with paper and pencil, and also, by the way, I think learning good calligraphy is very important.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
I have had professors who do not have Finale or any notation software installed. Thus, if I want to bring in a score and a MIDI realization to a lesson, I have to print it out and burn a CD. The reasoning is that they don't want to see students composing at the computer.

Ken Metz:
True, I understand this point and I agree with it. However, I'm a little more liberal than that – it's up to the student.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Do you ever assign compositional exercises, such as writing a serial piece?

Ken Metz:
I do in theory class. As far as composition goes, I would if a student showed an inclination or interest in that area.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
What about a dry spell, would you assign an exercise? Say, they wanted to start writing music, but they hadn't really yet?

Ken Metz:
Do you mean the first thing a serial piece (incredulous)?

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
That's just an example, but some sort of assignment with parameters?

Ken Metz:
Again, there are various ways to approach working with a student. For some students it would work fine to use a form. Compose a minuet or compose a parallel period. There's nothing wrong with that, there's lots of good parallel periods that still need to be composed.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
After graduation, how can composition students, and music students at large, translate their very academic skills into a career inside or outside of academia?

Ken Metz:
Any composition student should have a good dose of theory in their program. The other thing is strong keyboard skills. In order to get into academia, these composition students should really be able to serve as adjuncts competently for theory classes, because that's where there is a demand. As far as composition at an academic institution, I don't think that there's a lot of opportunity. Are you a theory and composition major at Texas State?

Aaron Carter-Cohn: I am a theory major, but I take as much composition as a composition major.

Ken Metz:
You want a balance. There are places that will hire composers, but if you look in the advertising for academic positions, they want applicants who are theorists. If you are a composer, they also want you to wear the hat of a theorist. Inside academia, the key is either having keyboard skills or being qualified to teach applied lessons on an instrument. So we have to have versatility.

Outside of academia there are things to do, believe it or not. I don't know the best route to those things, but there are applications out there, whether it's actually composing or providing support for composition. Then, of course, you can always put on concerts and try to develop your own enterprise in this area and there are people who are successful at that. I have a student that has made more money from composition than I ever have, she put out relaxation CDs and believe it or not she sold them. Being entrepreneurial, having that spirit can work. There's the commercial world, and nowadays it's a lot easier to break into that commercial world because of the technology, we can just email an MP3 to somebody – no problem.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
As an educator, do you feel a responsibility to prepare your students for a career?

Ken Metz:
My tendency is to aim them directly to graduate school, and my aim is for them to be educators also, to clone myself. I see it as part of my responsibility to pass on the knowledge that I have acquired. That's my main objective in preparing them for a career. I also think that music theory, more than composition, can teach people how to think. You are preparing them for a career if you're preparing them to be able to handle information, process it and deal with it in a systemized way. Preparation for a specific career may happen unintentionally. Someone I teach computer skills may go on to a career in computers, but I don't consciously guide them to that.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
One way strictly academic composers support themselves is to try for commissions, grants and awards – is that a way to support yourself?

Ken Metz:
In addition to compositional skills, that's a matter of having business and management skills. And there are composers that succeed at that. But it's very few compared to the number of composers that are out there. This might be the place to give you my spiel about the academic institution as a sort of wildlife refuge. I'm an endangered species, and I need to be protected, and this is where I can be protected. In an academic institution, nobody tells me what I have to write, how I have to write, or what I need to do with my work. There are pressures to be productive, but those are induced by the situation more than the fact that I'm going to starve if I don't write anything.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Is composing music in service of other mediums a viable alternative to pure musical composition?

Ken Metz:
I haven't done a lot of that. I helped a student do the music for a short film and that's about the only time I've done that. Yes, it is, and I actually would enjoy doing that. I think it really helps you to view music in a different way. When you're writing pure music, you're trying to get people's attention, and when you're writing film music you're trying to not get people's attention. You're trying to stay out of the way of the drama and trying to write so that you support the drama. I think that's a healthy exercise, but I don't have a lot of experience with it.

Composition Today
Aaron Carter-Cohn:
What is the role of technology both as an aid for instrumental composition and as a medium for composition itself?

Ken Metz:
Technology is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, I can sit here at this little computer and I can write a score for an orchestra. But on the other hand, how it sounds on the computer according to Finale is often not at all how it's going to sound when it's performed. The skill is to be able to tell the difference, and the problem is that young people aren't going to be able to do that. A student might bring in a piece for piano with one hand playing a 22^{nd} harmonic interval and when I point out that it's impossible, they say "Well, the computer can do it" – but people can't. These are pitfalls that actually hinder developing composers, but on the other hand if you have a hard time hearing, MIDI can help. Notation software is good for editing, because you can make a mistake without having to use an eraser. Technology facilitates the process, and I think it's inevitable that students will use notation software to compose music at some point in the process.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Do you think there are more composers because notation software is available?

Ken Metz:
Yes, I think there are, and I think that it is very powerful. We may be killing musicians by doing this kind of stuff, but it seems inevitable that we have to use the technology and be current with the technology.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Is theoretical analysis relevant to contemporary works?

Ken Metz:
I'm a big believer in theoretical analysis. The main benefit of theoretical analysis is that it helps us to know more about why we're doing what we're doing, why we choose the notes we choose and why we don't choose other options. Again, we go back to the concept of *the motive of the motive*: theoretical analysis through any of the various methods can give us certain insights into how composers work. It is important to develop an editor, the part of you that makes the final cut of what you produce has to be refined and has to be objective. Only through theoretical analysis can we really help develop our editor.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
With classical era compositions, there is a technique, a methodology that can be applied to everything. You can't really do that with modern works. When you talk about *the motive of the motive*, you're trying to get at the idea behind the material. Does this mean that you have to develop a new paradigm for each piece, instead of just applying it to Roman numeral or Schenkerian analysis?

Ken Metz:
I view any analysis or any attempt to explain what it is you are doing as analysis, whether it is using roman numeral analysis, which you might be able to do for some works, or a motivic analysis. It's still beneficial.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
You can also analyze a work in terms of a program, but you don't think there's a specific methodology that works for all modern works. La Rue Style analysis works for lots of pieces, are there any other useful techniques you can think of?

Ken Metz:
Is there one way to assure yourself that you are having success with your analysis? That's hard, because you can't apply the same technique to everything. But there are some aspects that seem to be important for all music. For example, is there enough change to keep interest? But that can be challenged too. It could be growth, it could be drastic contrast – by what method is the piece achieving an increase of interest? The worst thing in the world is to have a piece where you lose interest, that's for certain, no matter what style the piece is in. Of course, Steve Reich challenges that idea, but he always has change, the rate of change is just slower. Its like the dog – does the dog move its ear? That's what we want to go for. A good piece increases interest, perhaps to a golden mean point, and builds to climax; then there can be denouement, there can be the return to equilibrium. We can talk about the principle of Le Chatelier, where everything tends towards equilibrium. Can we fairly say that every piece must do this? I don't think so, but if it doesn't do that then, what have you got?

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So in modern analysis, we're looking for how a composer creates interest, as opposed to looking for the cadences or looking for a traditional form?

Ken Metz:
Right, because there are so many ways besides the traditional ways to create something that makes the dog's ear move.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
And Le Chatelier? I'm not familiar with him.

Ken Metz:
He's a chemist. The equilibrium principle is that in a chemical reaction you heat the chemicals until you get to a maximum level where the heat catalyzes the reaction. The reaction is change, and after the change there is a return to equilibrium – this is a general principle of the world.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
I've heard equilibrium talked about before in musical semiotics, and that can actually be applied to classical music as well as modern music.

Ken Metz:
Across the board. Maybe there isn't one theoretical technique that does this, but certainly we could imagine that this is something that might work. Again, I think there are successful pieces that are more ex-

citing at the beginning than they are at the end, but it's a hard thing to do.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
What is the relationship of contemporary composers to today's audiences and society?

Ken Metz:
This is another difficult question to answer, because it depends on which audience – there are so many. My audience right now is composers. Most of the time, my music is performed for a group of composers at a symposium or conference, or musicians at CMS. My audience is a few educated people. I have a relationship to them, but I don't have much of a relationship to the average person who shops for music at Wal-Mart. They would regard me as some type of strange bird, most likely [laughter]. My relationship to society – I need to be kept in the wildlife refuge, I am an endangered species, and I would not make it in the world.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Or you might be writing very different music?

Ken Metz:
Well, that's true. It might force me to do something else that was more cogent to the consumption idea, but luckily I'm not in that situation.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Well, I thought your tribute to Villa-Lobos was very appealing.

Ken Metz:
Under the guise of trying to be folky and using popular music, I allowed myself to be corrupted.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
I thought it was interesting, especially rhythmically. It has an infectious rhythm, and that's something that appeals to lots of people.

Ken Metz:
Well sure, and again rhythm is a very important element in what makes the dog's ear move. I always tell people that good rhythm will get you a lot farther than good pitches. Good pitches without rhythm – you've got nothing. With good rhythms and white keys you can write a great piece!

When I can give way on my aesthetic ground, as I did with the Monk or the Mingus pieces, I gave up something of me and I gave it to them and I benefited from it, because I grew from it, and it's all about growth. I hope that the next piece I write is better than the last piece I wrote, and as long as I'm doing that, I'm okay, I'm doing good stuff.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
What we accept as classical art music now was also the popular music 200 years ago in Europe, but the art music of today is far removed from popular music. I don't know whether there are more composers today, but even highly successful art composers, such as Corigliano or John Adams, aren't familiar to somebody on the street the way people knew Haydn or Handel when they went to London?

Ken Metz:
Well, they might know Corigliano from his film music, but not by name. And isn't that funny? Although, one wonders how many average people really knew who Haydn was. His music was played for the elite. Haydn was a court musician all his life. Did he ever have public consumption of his music? Yes, but only to educated people, so it may not be that different.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So maybe academia is not that different from the court system in its patronage of composers?

Ken Metz:
More or less. I recommend going to the symphony. If you don't go as much as possible, go just to investigate what's going on there. It's predominantly a wealthy, white audience.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
White haired typically…

Ken Metz:
Other races are not well represented, it's mostly still a white European audience at the symphony, and they're wealthy, and they like to dress up.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
The music that is being played, typically, at the San Antonio Symphony for instance, or the Dallas or the Austin Symphony for that matter, is going to be pretty familiar stuff.

Ken Metz:
Fairly true.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
A lot of the time they'll do kitschy stuff by bringing in a torch singer or something.

Ken Metz:
Yea, or they'll do a Schoenberg piece, but they'll apologize before they play it. As if saying "We know you aren't going to like this, but we feel obligated to play it."

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So the most pertinent audience for most composers is each other?

Ken Metz:
Yes.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So having a dialogue with other composers is a kind of audience.

Ken Metz:
It's very important.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Does American composition have an identity, or do you feel that art music has more of an international exchange that doesn't fall along national boundaries?

Ken Metz:
Yea. I would say that the latter is probably true. Nowadays, we're global. Yes, there is an American music, and it has some sort of identity…

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
But that kind of comes from Copland and Ives? That's kind of our nationalistic music and maybe we've gotten away from that?

Ken Metz:
There's no discernibly American music emerging right now. In fact, what is emerging in American music right now is the idea of diversity. Women composers are emerging, Asian composers, Latino composers – black musicians seem to be gravitating towards various popular formats.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
A lot of our most revered American composers are black. We already talked about Mingus and Monk, and then of course there's Ellington.

Ken Metz:
Well that's jazz, which raises another question: how do we include jazz into this equation? Yes, of course, Charlie Parker is under-recognized as a great American composer – Ellington, Monk, Mingus – all these people had a very important impact on American music. But it's still looked down upon by academia – they say "Ah, that's jazz," "No fair – jazz!" They blow the whistle on you.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
And jazz composition is segregated from composition at the University of North Texas and University of Texas – it's a separate degree.

Ken Metz:
If there's too many triads, seventh chords, ninth chords, that's jazz.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Recently, I tried to play a composition for Dr. Riepe, one of my "jazz" compositions, and he said, "You shouldn't ask me, because I have no idea."

Ken Metz:
Within that realm, though, there's plenty of room for creativity, because pitch and interval content is only one facet.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
How do we raise awareness and interest in new art music?

Ken Metz:
We just do what we're doing, and we don't worry about, you try to get yourself into a refuge as soon possible.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So you don't think there could be a resurgence of interest in art music?

Ken Metz:
I think what really needs to happen, and I'm not doing it enough, is we need to get involved with the educational system. I just wrote a minor version of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" for young people, and I'm going to take it over to my friend who is a teacher.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Did you have to really limit your demands?

Ken Metz:
I did, I limited myself to range and I also restricted the rhythms. I'm not going to have [sings] "Da da da da duh-duh-duh [getting faster and faster] ... DA!!" I'm not going to do anything like that, but even as you limit, limit, limit, limit, you still have a way to move the dog's ear – "Uh!?" You can still do it with even lots of limits, like no accidentals, it's possible – but it's not easy.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Yea, it's probably more difficult.

Ken Metz:
It's really a challenge. Our culture is not reaching out to kids enough. First of all, we have to encourage music education in academia. As much as I disagree with music educators much of the time, I support them completely, even the band director, who is nothing short of a barking metronome, is important. In some ways they're killing music, but at least they're sticking the horns in their hands.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Well people from the Northeast would say that type of band director is a Texas phenomenon – the overly technical, rhythmic exactness.

Ken Metz:
Well, it's very important that music is a part of their education; we have to keep that going.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
A lot of the music that's being written right now and what's being accepted in academic circles is perhaps a little bit of a return to consideration of the audience, an incorporation of jazz in some cases, a little bit less of a Babbitt model of "Who needs an audience anyway?"[2]

Ken Metz:
No way.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So do you think there can be any resurgence in interest by the general public?

Ken Metz:
That's a tough issue. For myself, I don't consider it at all, I just write and I let the rest take care of itself. My thing is not to try to do this or try to be that. My goal is to make music that is interesting and has something meaningful in it. Sometimes I try to make music that is fun or humorous – humor is an undervalued element in music. But if you are a composer you just do what you're doing and don't let that other stuff be your concern, because you can't go chasing after a style.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
I don't think you should either, but I think I could take a layman, a non-academic listener to a concert

[2] This refers to Milton Babbitt's famous article "Who cares if you listen?," *High Fidelity* 8/2 (1958): 38-40, 126-127.

with Adams and Corigliano – and your music – and be confident that they would enjoy it.

Ken Metz:
Well that's good, so there's something to be said for that idea.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
I would be hesitant to take that same person to a concert of serialist or electro-acoustic music.

Ken Metz:
Well, wait until you teach a music appreciation class. It's so much fun to sit there and put on Milton Babbitt and groove to it and say "What, you don't like that?" The fact of the matter is Milton Babbitt did what Milton Babbitt did for the same reason scientists do basic research. In science, there's some research that gets the grants, because it's going to cure cancer, but then there's some research that is funded purely because humans want to know more. And so it is with music. As a composer, I think it's more important that we do basic research and have that type of attitude, rather than to do something where we try to cure cancer.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
What are your thoughts on composer-in-residence programs?

Ken Metz:
Those are kind of hard to get, you have to be really established to get one. However, there are composer-in-residence programs in public school systems for people who are less established.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
That would be a good way to connect with younger people and make them aware of new art music. How about composition organizations, do they have an important role in preserving the practice of art music and getting it to the audiences that desire it?

Ken Metz:
Well, they're very important. I just came from a meeting about scholarship. If you become a professor, it is incumbent upon you to produce scholarship. These organizations are for people who need to demonstrate their scholarship, so I am very grateful to these various groups that I'm a member of: SCI, CMS, the Composers' Alliance of San Antonio.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
That seems like a unique organization, and that's the one that I was gearing this question towards.

Ken Metz:
It's been very helpful. Composers need other composers, to listen and share, to discuss ideas and music, so that you don't live in a fish tank by yourself. The other benefit is that we share opportunities with each other.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So beneficial in terms of networking as well as sharing ideas.

Ken Metz:
Networking, exchange, collegiality and scholarship. See that big thick book up there [points], I have to collect all the crap I do and put it in that thing. That's why they gave me tenure, because I did all that stuff. I have pictures of performances, programs – always save your programs, etc.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
I definitely do that. How do you build an audience for CASA? And what's the difference between having a concert and just getting together and playing your works for each other?

Ken Metz:
Well, first of all we have a budget to advertise and we also get the critic there so we can have peer review – that's a very important thing to have your concert reviewed, even if it's a terrible review and I've gotten many terrible reviews, let me tell you.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
But you're reviewed, you're in JSTOR.

Ken Metz:
Exactly, I'm cited, I'm reviewed, if you Google me you'll find something about me, it may not be very flattering but hey …

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
It was worth writing about.

Music and Numbers

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
You're a chemist, so I can only assume you know a lot about science and math. How do you relate number theory to music theory?

Ken Metz:
Well, in music you're throwing around numbers all the time, the first beat of the second measure of the third movement of the fourth piece… Numbers are phenomenologically always occurring. It is my belief that numbers also imply certain organizational relationships that occur in and of themselves, and this occurs on so many different levels that you can literally use this idea as a generative tool in music. Schillinger's method was based on a numerical approach to rhythm and what to do with pitch. Schillinger was a very interesting guy, although his pieces were not very successful, this quantitative idea inputted into musical devices is really intriguing, and it can happen in so many ways.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Pitch, rhythm, dynamics…

Ken Metz:
All of that.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So how is that different from super-serialism?

Ken Metz:
We are conditioned to think of numbers as sort of democracy. We imply equality of units between the value of one and the value of two, even if we're counting a little rock and a big rock. The abstract unit of enumeration is taken for granted as a given, But originally, in the Pythagorean concept of numbers, numbers also had a spatial character as well as an abstract numerical entity. In other words, numbers in geometry were intricately linked to each other. For example, the number three was the triangle, and the number four was a square, so we have this idea of the platonic solids. Even in sound, where we cannot experience the dimensionality of the numbers because our ears only hear things as events, we can't describe that in tangible terms, but we nonetheless experience numerical relationships. It's no accident that in a circle of fifths progression, sevenths are prepared and resolve to thirds, and the seventh that resolves to the third then becomes the seventh for the next third, and so it's not just a circle of fifths, it's also a recurring circle of sevenths.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Thirds and sevenths can move down by half-step.

Ken Metz:
7-3-7-3. Exactly. So we can see that there's a special relationship that exists between those particular numbers. I wrote a paper about this called "Why Seven?" Why are there seven pitches in each mode and how does the seventh scale degree create this urgency for eight? In other words, there's something inherent to the enumeration that gives structure to musical sound. It's something you can't really put your finger on, but it is going on. So if you try to ride that horse, it leads you to new avenues of possibilities.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Are serialism and set theory ways to do that?

Ken Metz:
This might seem insane, but I figured out that this series of numbers has very unique characteristics: 3-5-6-10. Three over five and six over ten are equivalent fractions: 3/5 = 6/10. Six times five and three times ten are the same: 6*5 = 3*10 = 30. And three plus five is half as much as six plus ten: 3+5 = (6+10) / 2. So there's this network of nesting that happens which I think is unique. This particular thing is reproduced no matter what numbers you're on, it all can be reduced to this particular pattern. Then you can quickly see that the chord is the root, the third and the fifth. Scale degree six is very im-

portant. Then there are the thirds and the sixths – harmony begins to reveal itself within this system. I've always tried to think about twelve as well: the twelve tones, the clock, twenty-four hours. What's happening in musical development is that we hear the line, but what makes the line is the circle and what makes growth is not an increase, but rather the spiral. If we can picture our music in terms of numerical expansions, we began to have another way of looking at how development can grow to a climax and return to equilibrium, a quantitative approach. Now will that make your compositions great? Not in and of itself, but it's certainly something to work with.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So, how do you translate this into musical ideas? Into pitches, rhythms and dynamics?

Ken Metz:
To write *Jihad*, I set up a system where I could use the notes G, E, B, A, and D, or I could flat them or sharp them. How the system unfolds will depend on other aspects, but the word Jihad is the motive and is always present in the piece.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So when did you write that piece and when did you start thinking about composing this way?

Ken Metz:
I'm not saying that I do compose that way, but my interest in relating number theory to music theory goes back to a Pythagorean concept, the *Tetraktys*.[3] Pythagoras thought this was the most important thing in the world. If you take these rows of dots, they add up to 10.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
And it also makes an equilateral triangle.

Ken Metz:
If you continue this idea, the next triangular number is five and here we have the fifteen major keys [including the enharmonic spellings]. Nature builds upon these relationships.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Do you think part of the reason music relates so well to numbers is because of acoustics, or is it more abstract?

Ken Metz:
A lot of it is acoustics.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
It seems to me that we've constructed a very numerical system in terms of our notation and tunings.

Ken Metz:
It's the clock. It's all about the regulation of the second.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
The minor second?

Ken Metz:
No, the ticking second. When they were able to make that consistent, then that's what led to gears, to circularity, to the organizational principles … It's the result of making one second the same length of time as the 2nd second and the 3rd second. It's a very abstract concept when you consider that time seems to be a liquid. To me, there's not one second, then another second and then another second – there's just [throat sounds like wind in a tunnel] going on. So the question is how do we dive into that flux, and that's where we have imposed this whole music theory. The idea of rhythm is based on the democratization of time increment and so are many things in Western thought. Once you've got the clock, you've got everything you're looking for. This musical system goes back to Pythagoras, about 500 B.C., and even before with the Byzantines. So I've begun to view numbers and how they relate to music in special ways that can be very interesting.

[3] Metz thoroughly explores the concepts of Pythagoras and the Tetraktys model and their relationship to music in his paper "Why 7? (A Model for Tonality)," unpublished manuscript, 2000, 20 pages.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
Different from our normal model.

Ken Metz:
The biggest burden of being a composer is to find new paths. I call it the tyranny of innovation.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
So you think all serious composers need to try to be avant-garde in some way?

Ken Metz:
We aren't contributing if we don't at least try to do that in some way. Not to say that you can't take the tonal system and be innovative still. You can use I-V-I and still be innovative, but it's harder than ever to do that.

Aaron Carter-Cohn:
I think there are some that would disagree with you on that. I'm not one of them, but there are definitely academics that feel like you can't really write original music with such a progression.

Ken Metz:
And I would say that they are probably not very creative people. Because it's not the pitches, it's not even where they go necessarily, it's how they get to where they're going. It's not whether they were triads or how they were organized, though that is important. Schoenberg said: "There are still plenty of great pieces to be written in the key of C." I believe that Schoenberg was right about that.

Book Reviews

Portable Music & Its Functions by A. Williams

by Johanna L. Friedrich
E-Mail: jojofriedrich@hotmail.com

Williams, Andrew. *Portable Music and Its Functions*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. $32.95, 127 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8204-8125-8 (soft cover), http://www.peterlang.com.

Millions of people take their music with them every day to modify their daily experiences. Why do we listen to portable music via headphones using Walkmans, iPods, and the like? What functions does this portable apparatus serve? Are these functions found in all music listening activities, or are they relatively new? *Portable Music and Its Functions* compiles data and conclusions from research conducted by Andrew Williams, who is an adjunct lecturer in the Elder School of Music at the University of Adelaide, Australia.

Williams' insight allows the reader to examine the functions music and portable music play in our lives. Chapter one begins with a brief description of portable music, an individual musical experience, adapting Michael Bull's analysis to focus on music, and outlines the functions of portable music. Chapters two through four focus on the eleven functions identified, and chapter five summarizes the entire study.

The development of recorded music began with the invention of the phonograph by Thomas Edison in 1897. Williams includes quotes by famous composers predicting the benefits and downfalls of recorded music of which many views remain popular today. Michael Bull's research focused on the Walkman and on the many functions for which humans use portable recorded music, with the exception of the choice of music in and of itself. Williams expanded Bull's research to include chosen music as a primary function of his research. Chosen sound, Learning, Aestheticisation, Environmental Control, Boundary Demarcation, Interpersonal Mediation, Company, Aural Mnemonic, Mood Management, Time Management, and Activation were the eleven functions described in the study.

Many functions worked in conjunction with others. Chapter two, Chosen Sound and Learning, describes *chosen sound* as a primary function found in most cases. The listener listens to the music because he / she enjoys listening to it and the Walkman or iPod facilitate this desire for making music accessible. Williams added *learning* to his finding, when 12 of his subjects were music majors. This was not a factor in Bull's study and thus not included in his findings. Learning occurs when the primary focus is on the music itself for the purpose of understanding it completely.

Chapter three identifies the four functions of portable music involving listeners' interactions with their environments and surroundings. The two effects of *aestheticisation* involve the listeners' observations while listening to music, such as viewing life through a camera lens accompanied by an audio track, or combining recorded music with the ambient noise of their surroundings. *Environmental control* allows listeners to filter unwanted noise such as noise from a busy city street, and *boundary demarcation* allows listeners to distance themselves or 'transport' themselves to a more pleasant environment. *Interpersonal mediation* makes the listener less approachable for social interactions. This can be a desired action, allowing the listener the choice of socializing, or it may be an unintentional side effect.

Chapter four examines the listeners' focus on themselves. Music can provide a sense of *company* for those isolated by human contact during travel or other settings. Listening provides a sense of comfort – similar to speaking to a friend or loved one. *Aural mnemonics* trigger feelings, emotions, and memories of events from the past. *Mood management* enables listeners to have the ability to monitor or change their moods. *Time management* identifies the listeners' perception of filling time that would otherwise seem to be wasted, such as commuting on a bus or train or waiting in line. And

finally, *activation* attributes the use of music in exercise as the ability to move to the beat, resulting in more strenuous physical activity.

Williams concludes that the experience of portable music initially appears to be a solitary one, but evidence suggests that mobile listening is deceptive. Portable music listening might disconnect the listeners' possible interactions with the surroundings; the listeners' perceptions of their surroundings might change or the act of listening might enhance the listeners' surroundings. Prior to recorded music, some music was not available to everyone. Recorded music was the first step to making music available to a wider audience. Portable recorded music is the second step, engaging the individual listener.

Portable Music and Its Functions is easily readable and relevant to modern society. The structure of the book is logical, and each category was supported with clear examples and explanations. This book can be recommended highly not only to the media specialist or sociologist, but also to anyone whishing to identify and understand their personal uses of portable music.

James K. Wright: Schoenberg, Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle

by Rebekah K. Smeltzer
E-Mail: rksmeltzer@gmail.com

James K. Wright. *Schoenberg, Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2007. $79.95. 191 pages. Softcover, ISBN 978-3-03911-287-6, US-ISBN 978-0-8204-8935-3. http://www.peterlang.com.

While this book is the sixth volume of a series published by Peter Lang, entitled *Varia Musicologica*, there appears to be no direct connection between this work and the others in the series. Wright opens the book with a brief discussion of the nature of 20th century music theory, and the "gradual erosion of a commonly accepted epistemological framework" (p. 11), including the rejection of universals in music. Questions such as "How and why have current trends in music theory shifted away from the traditional quest for musical universals" (p. 13) led Wright to Arnold Schoenberg and Ludwig Wittgenstein, two prominent citizens of early 20th century Vienna. Despite some notable Schoenberg scholars' views (Wright references Pamela White in particular), Wright believes that Schoenberg actually shared many of the same views held by the more 'progressive' logical positivistic school of Wittgenstein. Throughout this work, Wright argues that the essential themes and convictions that informed Wittgenstein's early philosophy bears a striking resemblance to those that dominate Schoenberg's writings. He states that one of the goals of his book is to provide a close study of the correspondence between their ideas. Wright mentions Benjamin Boretz and Edward T. Cone's attempt to link Schoenberg to Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle in their *Perspectives on Contemporary Music Theory* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972).

The book is divided into five chapters, with the first chapter being an introduction, and the fifth chapter containing the summary and conclusions. Chapter two provides some general background on "the problem of universals" and establishes a framework for the ensuing discussion by aligning historical postulates of music theory into four general propositional categories. Wright then examines Schoenberg's harmonic and aesthetic theories, focusing in particular on their relativistic aspects. He argues that Schoenberg embraces an epistemological relativism concerning values in aesthetics and harmonic theory, rather than a thoroughgoing relativism that denies or ignores the existence and importance of the universals of physics, psychophysics, and cognition. In the third chapter, Wright introduces the early philosophy of Wittgenstein and examines several points of intersection between the positions adopted by Schoenberg and the early Wittgenstein. The fourth chapter finds Wright em-

ploying the conceptual apparatus provided by Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle to address some of the problems inherent in music-theoretical formalism. He also considers some of the implications of these ideals for music theory in the latter half of the 20th century. Additionally, Wright applies Wittgenstein's views concerning the foundations of mathematics to mathematical modeling in music analysis, a field of research in which, according to Wright, Schoenberg is "generally cited as an inspiration and point of departure" (p. 16).

Throughout the book, Wright argues that Schoenberg and the early Wittgenstein adopted "strikingly similar positions" concerning twelve major epistemological meta-themes, which are named and described as follows (pp. 155-157):

> 1. *The Icarus Principle*: The assertion that "facts" are the only things we can speak about productively, and that aesthetics and art theory should be concerned exclusively with pointing to these facts, and with making comparisons …
> 2. *Wittgenstein's "Stop"*: The assertion that to attempt to use language to address metaphysical propositions concerning value and aesthetics is to misuse language and to fail to understand the limits of its reach …
> 3. *The "Is/Ought" Dichotomy*: The assertion that any "foundationalist" or absolutist approach to questions of value and aesthetics is untenable; i.e., that we cannot support aesthetic value-judgments by appealing to epistemological foundations. Facts themselves cannot be enlisted to inform our understanding of what to do with or about them.
> 4. *Important Nonsense (the Value of Values)*: The assertion that, despite our inability to co-opt the language of knowledge to speak meaningfully about values (meta-themes #2 and #3, above), questions concerning value are precisely the ones that matter most in life and art.
> 5. *Contemplation of the Art-Object "Sub Specie Aeterni"*: The assertion that our role in the presence of art is not so much to judge as to contemplate. The artist's task is to present us with objects of contemplation. The art-object embodies its own value…
> 6. *Theories as Frameworks*: The assertion that theories are largely "systems of presentation" or "ways of speaking" about phenomena. These theoretical frameworks (or conventions) are relativistic in the sense that they hold no claim to universal truth beyond their own terms.
> 7. *Rejection of "Heart and Brain" Dualism*: The assertion that the world of feelings is inseparable from the world of the intellect; they are one and the same.
> 8. *The Formal Autonomy of Logical and Mathematical Structure*: The assertion that formal, self-enclosed, "rule-governed-ness" is a defining characteristic of language, logic, mathematics, and modernist art. These formalisms are *about* their own structure, they are not about the world in any meaningful sense.
> 9. *Word-to-Word Correspondence*: The assertion that any form of representation must be answerable to reality. Notwithstanding their characteristic formalisms, language (for the early Wittgenstein) and music (for Schoenberg) are not merely symbolic games. For the early Wittgenstein, language points to the real world and must be understood in this way … Schoenberg stressed how his conception of musical logic applied to real material musical artworks manifest in sound and perception.
> 10. *"The World is the Totality of Facts, Not of Things"*: The assertion that individual things are not, in themselves, truly objects of knowledge …
> 11. *The Equation of Ethics of Aesthetics*: The assertion that ethics and aesthetics are inseparable; they are one and the same.
> 12. *In the Beginning was the Deed*: Whether it is a composer creating an aesthetic object or a person committing an ethical *act*, both are indisputably action in the world, contributing to new and irrefutable facts of the world. "Doing" and "showing" are therefore not subject to the epistemological pitfalls inherent in speaking, conceptualizing, and theorizing about the arts and ethics.

Chapters two and three were primarily devoted to a discussion of meta-themes #1 through #7, themes #8 through #10 were discussed in chapter four, and the final two meta-themes are briefly addressed in chapter five. As the first major work to expressly link Wittgenstein and Schoenberg, this book is interesting; however, due to the specialized nature of the research, one should ideally be knowledgeable in both the fields of philosophy and music, particularly the works and writings of Wittgenstein and Schoenberg, to fully understand and appreciate this work.

Nico Schüler, Ph.D., Editor
Texas State University, School of Music, 601 University Drive, San Marcos, TX 78666, USA
Phone: +512-245-3395 • nico.schuler@txstate.edu • http://www.nicoschuler.com • http://www.scmb.us